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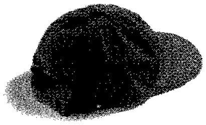

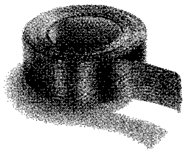

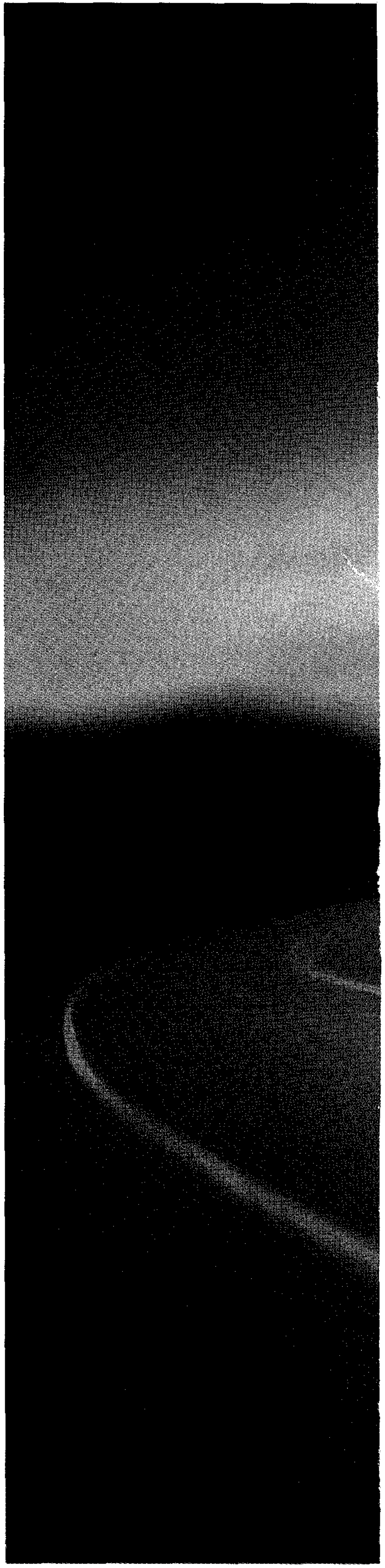

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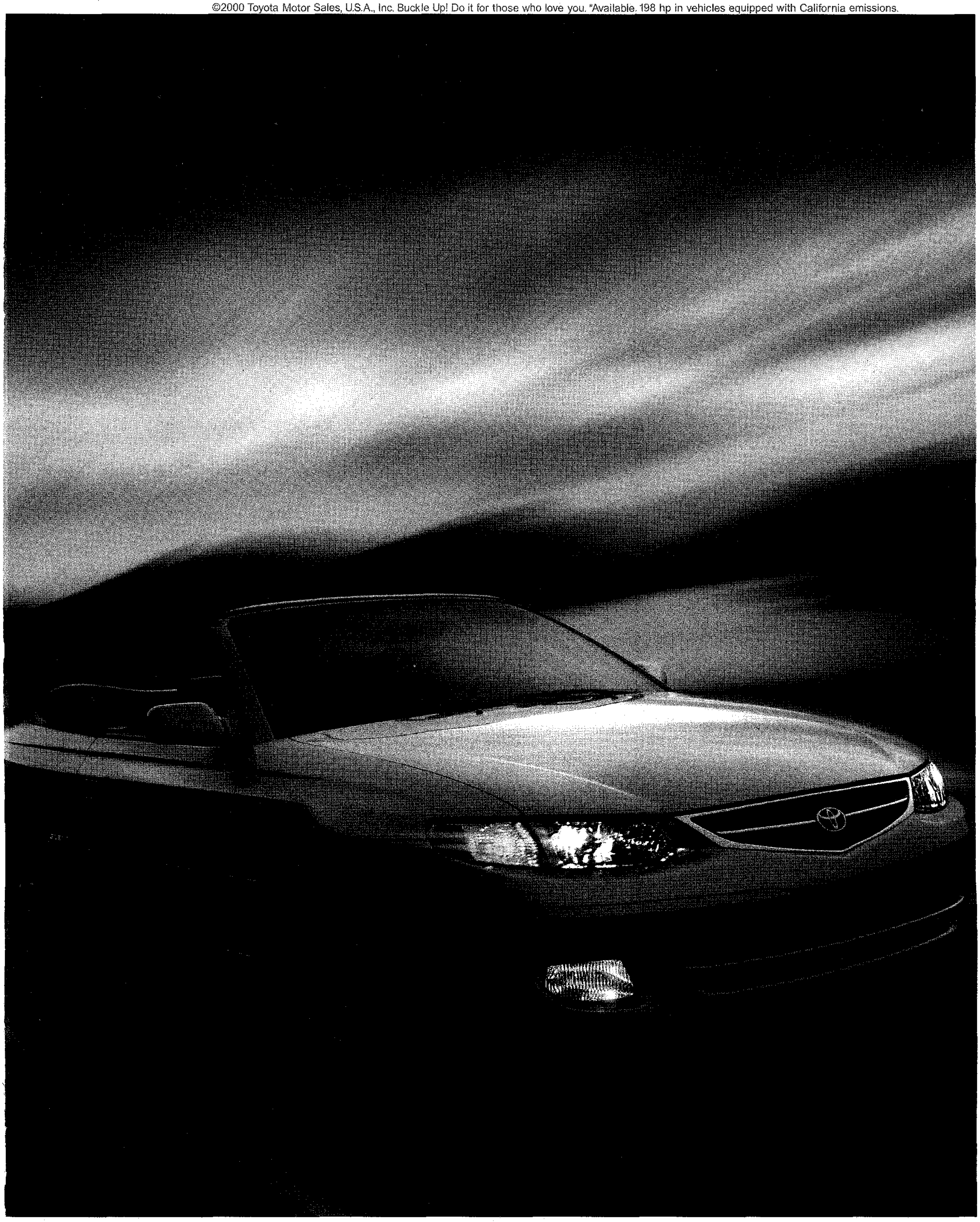

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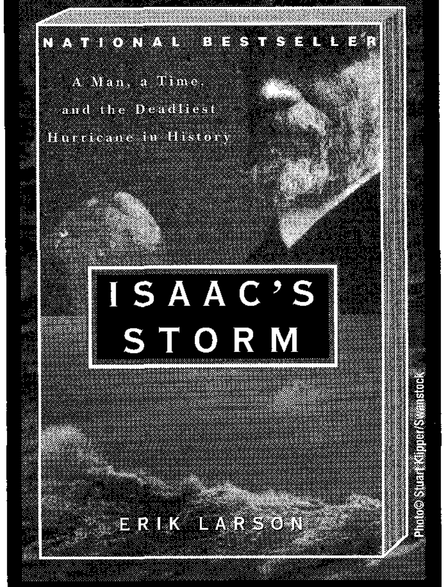
NATIONAL BESTSELLER
A Man, a Time and the Deadliest Hurricane in History
ISAAC'S STORM
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THE NEW YORKER

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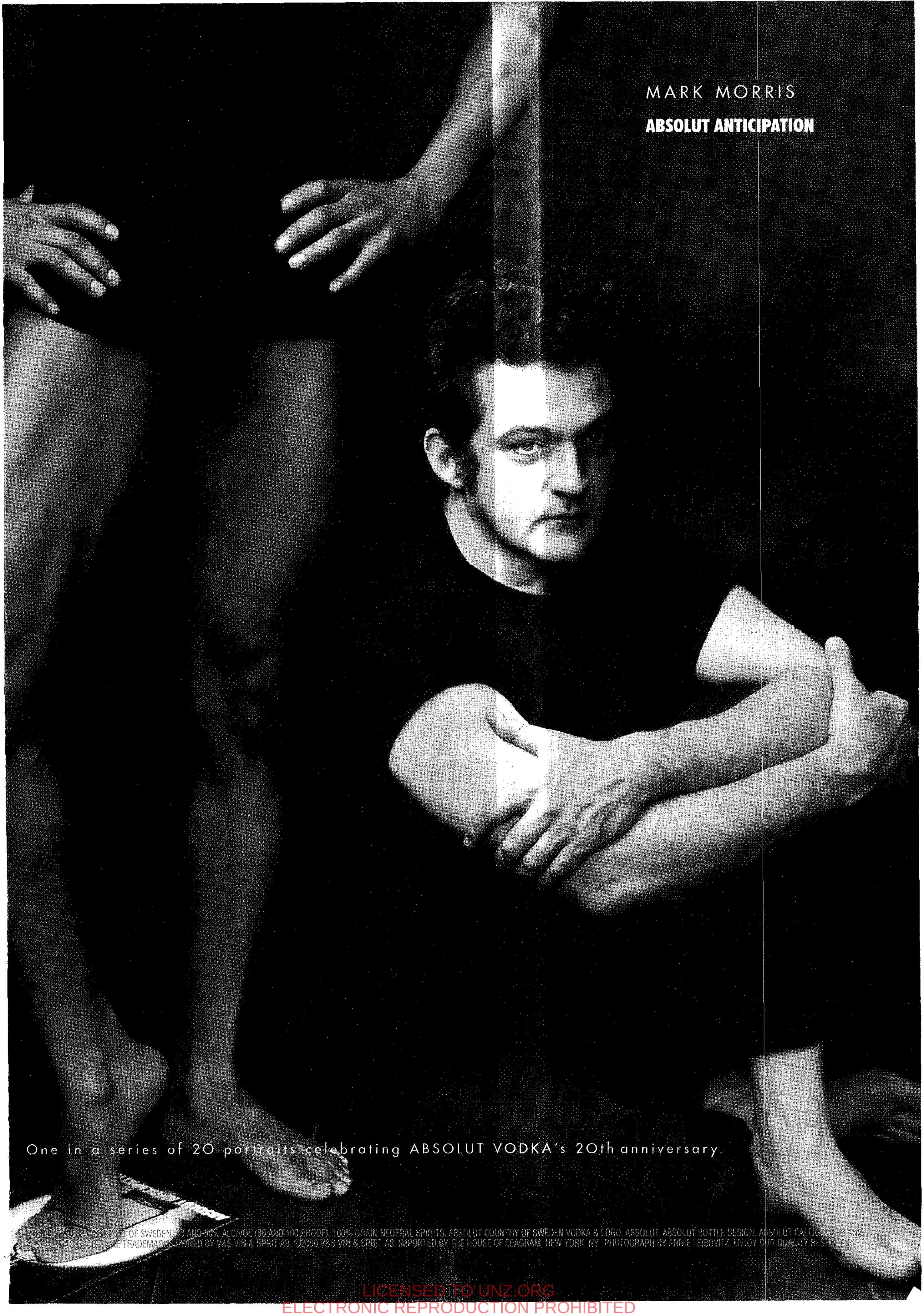

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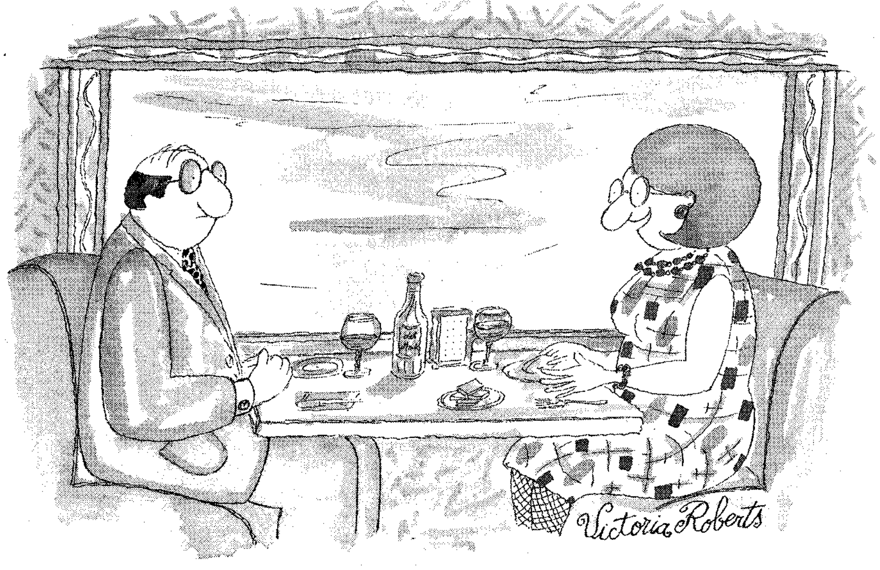

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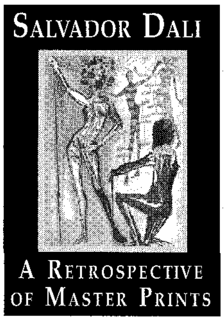
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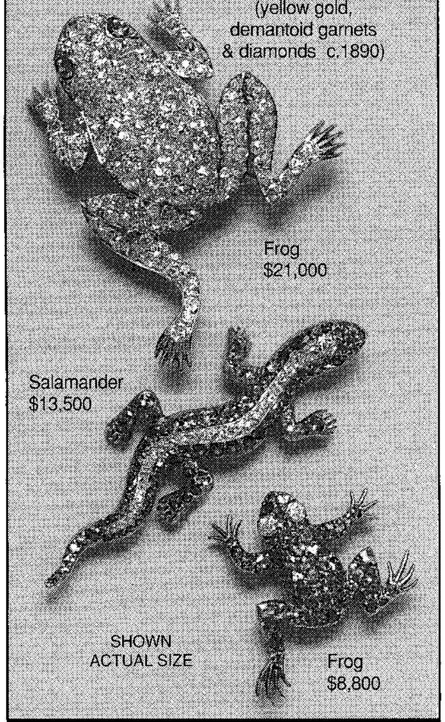

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THE MAIL

MAN V. MANN

In his article on Aimee Mann (Pop Music, June 12th), Nick Hornby cites my comment in *mojo* magazine that "quality pop music is among the dearly departed" and suggests that it is refuted by Mann's music. Unfortunately, his description of her music as "wonderful Beatles-tinged pop rock" with "sinuous Burt Bacharach-like melodies" shows that ancient history (at least in pop-music years) must be invoked to describe the current state of affairs. The music is, if not as dead as Prokofiev, at least living in the past. Having been in the pop band Sparks since the early nineteen-seventies, I feel that pop is every bit as substantial a musical form as classical music or jazz, and that it can convey musical and lyrical ideas that other forms of music cannot. Hornby says that "nobody sees pop music . . . as a tool of the revolution; no one expects it to change the world." Well, I do. Incidentally, Hornby calls Sparks "slightly annoying." I've always felt that we were extremely annoying.

Ron Mael
Encino, Calif.

FATHERS AND SONS

Donald Dawidoff, about whose love and madness his son, Nicholas, wrote ("My Father's Troubles," June 12th), lived on my block. I met him, warily, while challenging his hostile stares at me and my biracial children. Though he was, at his best, obviously mad, we exchanged civilities over the years, and I came to look forward to our chance encounters. His interest in the ethical standards I bring to my psychoanalytic practice seemed both informed and authentic, and I had the sense that he could detect any insincerity on my part in a heartbeat. I had lately wondered what had become of him, and was saddened to learn of his death. His son's memorial does him double honor, not only by portraying so aptly the neighbor I found both daunting and compelling but also by invoking the author's own warm, unflinching honesty.

John C. Fisher
New York City

A FRIEND OF THE COURT?

Jeffrey Toobin's "The Judge Hunter" (June 12th), about Theo Kamasinski's judicial whistle-blowing in New Hampshire, brought to mind Kamasinski's similarly notable achievement in Connecticut. Pre-Kamasinski, the Connecticut Judicial Review Council—the official body that investigates public complaints against judges—had no street address and no telephone number, and its members almost always met in secret. The council even had the power to punish people who revealed information about their complaints. Kamasinski filed suit, and now the council's address and telephone are listed, and it lacks the power to retaliate against whistle-blowers. In some circles here, Kamasinski is regarded as a pariah.

Nancy Burton
Redding Ridge, Conn.

A DUBIOUS MASCOT

As a Brit, someone who lives in a country where handguns are banned, I was delighted to read in The Talk of the Town (Comment, June 12th) that the National Rifle Association has adopted Eddie Eagle as its gun-safety mascot. It may, however, wish to note that Eddie (the Eagle) Edwards is a British popular icon, the man responsible for reinvigorating the generally rather dull sport of ski jumping. His brilliantly innovative technique was to slide down the ramp and plummet vertically to near certain injury and possible death. It was compelling viewing. I wish the N.R.A. mascot every success in following the example of his illustrious namesake.

Adrian Gregory
Oxford, U.K.

•

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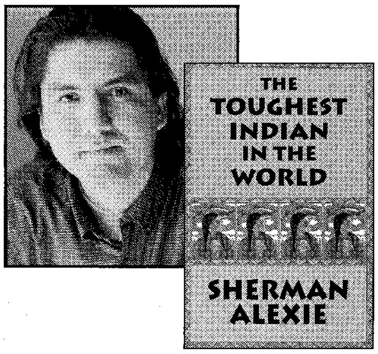
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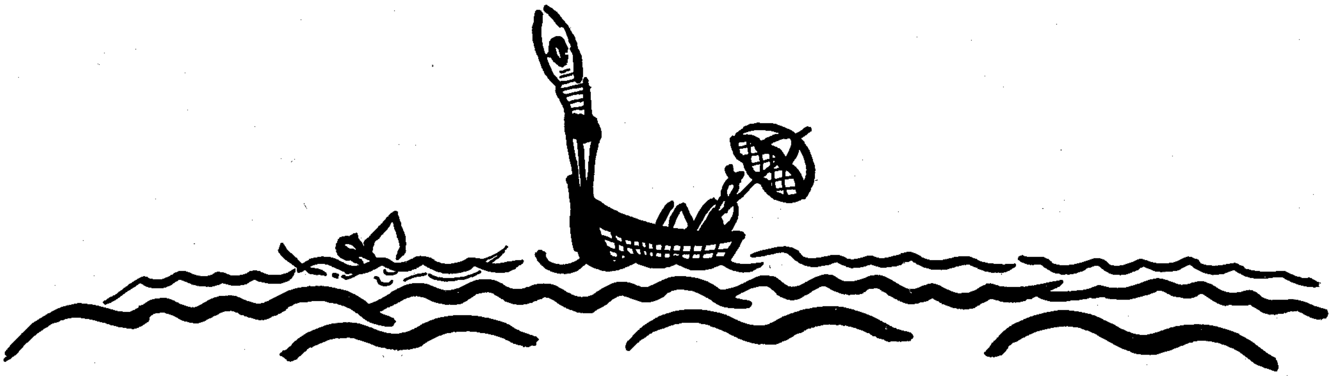

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

EMERGING ARTISTS
The first installation in the Performing Garage's summer festival is a double bill, with a work by Joe Diebes and Jeff Sugg, described as "apocrypha for string quartet, electronics, light, and projections," and another from the Seattle "space-noise" trio Hovercraft. July 13-16 at 8. The series continues through July 30. (33 Wooster St. 966-3651.)

FESTIVAL OF INDIAN THEATRE
A series of works by contemporary Indian playwrights, performed in English by the original Indian casts. July 14 at 7 and July 15-18 at 8: Mahesh Dattani's "Dance Like a Man." Through July 26. The festival runs through Aug. 2. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 346-8510.)

JESUS HOPPED A TRAIN
A man is imprisoned for murdering a cult leader, in a comedy-drama by Stephen Adly Guirgis. The actor Philip Seymour Hoffman, recently seen in "True West," is the director. Previews begin July 18. (Center Stage, 48 W. 21st St. 929-2228.)

THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER
Nathan Lane and Jean Smart lead the cast in a Roundabout revival of Kaufman and Hart's 1939 comedy. Jerry Zaks is the director. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

NEVER SWIM ALONE
The Canadian playwright Daniel MacIvor's latest dark comedy—thirteen scenes concerned with the lifelong friendship of two men. Preview on July 12. Opens July 13 at 8. (Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

SPINNING INTO BUTTER
Rebecca Gilman's drama about the aftermath of a racist incident at a politically correct Vermont college. Daniel Sullivan is the director. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AIDA
Disney's new musical—five years in the making and a product of Pharaonic expense—is, if not perfect, a lively, polished entertainment with bursts of joyful flamboyance worthy of its composer, Elton John. The two female leads—Heather Headley, as Aida, and Sherie René Scott, as Amneris—shine in their different ways, and Bob Crowley's brilliant sets give the show both visual dazzle and emotional resonance. Directed by Robert Falls. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/10/00.) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.)

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AQUILA THEATRE COMPANY
The British-American touring troupe is in town for the summer, presenting repertory performances of the Iliad and "The Comedy of Errors." (Hemmerdinger Hall, 100 Washington Sq. E. 307-4100.)

BROTHERS AND SISTERS
The Maly Drama Theatre of St. Petersburg's adaptation of a trilogy of novels by Fyodor Abramov, part of the Lincoln Center Festival. Performed, in two parts, in Russian with simultaneous English translation. Continues through July 16. (John Jay College Theatre, 899 Tenth Ave., at 57th St. 875-5928.)

CONTACT
The director and choreographer Susan Stroman's dance play, a triptych of simple stories about the various forms of human connection and the atmosphere of longing, is a big-hearted, witty crowd-pleaser. (10/18 & 10/25/99) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

COPENHAGEN
Michael Frayn's play speculates on the controversial 1941 reunion of the two giants of quantum mechanics—the physicists Niels Bohr (Philip Bosco) and Werner Heisenberg (Michael Cumpsty). It is so meticulous, so admirable, and so grave that you want to tousle its well-kempt appearance and tell it to lighten up. Nevertheless, the director, Michael Blakemore, manages to make dynamic and suggestive an evening that consists of three actors (Blair Brown plays Margrethe Bohr) and three chairs. (4/24 & 5/1/00) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

CURRENT EVENTS
A liberal California senatorial candidate returns to his Connecticut home, in a new drama by the actor and playwright David Marshall Grant ("Snakebit"). (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes July 16.)

THE DESIGNATED MOURNER
Through a series of intercut monologues, this extraordinary, beautifully written play by Wallace Shawn imagines a time in the future when the contemporary culture will have lost its historical memory and literary heritage and taken up residence in a state of barbarous, mindless sensation. Alternately coruscating and hilarious, the tale is narrated by Shawn with pitch-perfect irony, and Deborah Eisenberg and Larry Pine give strong performances as remnants from the world of privilege and taste which Shawn is at once mocking and mourning. (5/15/00) (21 South William Street. 532-8887. Closes July 17.)

DIRTY BLONDE
Mae West's flirty and dirty persona is the subject of a cunningly written, raffish evening conceived by the writer-actress Claudia Shear and the director James Lapine. Mae's story is recounted with brio by two fans—Jo (Shear, who doubles winningly as Mae) and Charlie (Tom Riis Farrell). The success of the play rests not on the louche facts of West's life but on the intersection of her story with the sweetness of the evolving relationship between the two lost souls who narrate it. (2/7/00) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF
Ntozake Shange's 1974 choreopoem, directed by George Faison. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

F-STOP
Olga Humphrey's dark comedy brings a paparazzo (the raffish Christopher Burns) and a Hong Kong film actress (Patricia Randell) together at an African refugee camp. Humphrey is equally deft at evoking true horror and film-world banality, and her unflinching mix of the two gives the show its humor and power. (HomeGrown Theatre, 2628 Broadway, at 99th St. 229-7500. Closes July 16.)

HIP-HOP THEATRE FESTIVAL
Two one-woman shows: "Surface Transit," by Sarah Jones, who portrays eight urban characters, and "Sistah Supreme," an autobiographical piece by Liza Colón-Zayas. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

ICE FACTORY FESTIVAL 2000
Soho Think Tank's summer shindig highlighting new works continues with "Asphalt," a dance-opera performed by Jane Comfort and Company. July 12-15 at 7. The festival continues through Aug. 12. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 966-4844.)

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR
This misguided Broadway revival of Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1971 musical version of the Saviour's last days on earth starts out by asking the tantalizing question "What's the buzz?" but never delivers a theatrically satisfying answer. Still, with its archaic whiff of right-wing outrage and its singable seventies-rock score, it's fun for nostalgia's sake. (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

JITNEY
August Wilson's play is set in a car-service station in 1977, in a part of Pittsburgh which is being demolished faster than it's being renovated. In this atmosphere of decay, Wilson's characters struggle

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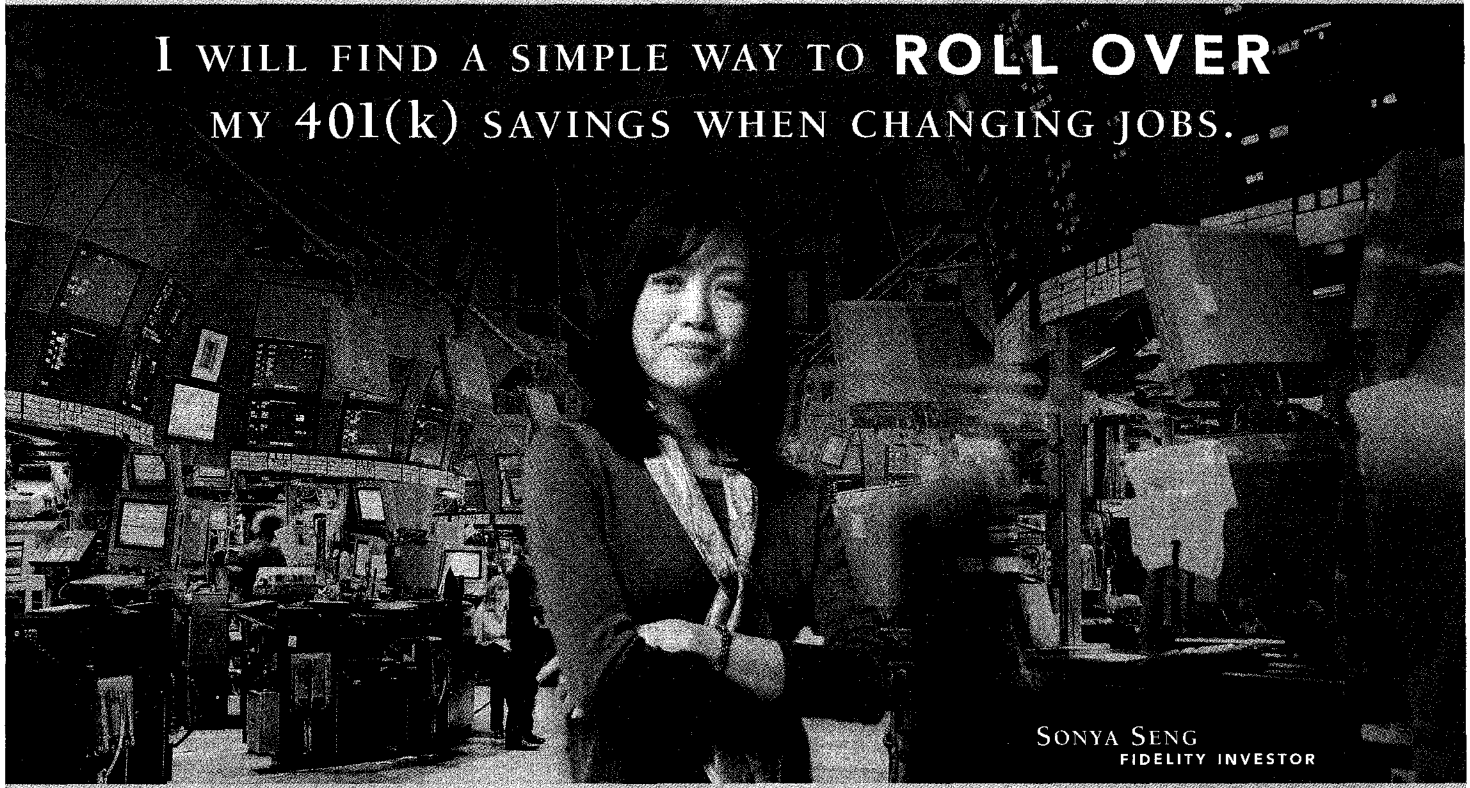

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with themselves and with each other to find some hope, and some peace, amidst the rubble. The cast of nine wonderful actors hit perfect notes of collision and cohesion, and turn what might otherwise be a draggy experience (the play runs to nearly three hours) into a riveting and moving one. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

JOE FEARLESS (A FAN DANCE)
A great and irresistible idea—above-the-rim basketball choreographed for the stage—attached to a goofy melodrama, in which the title character loses his job, wife, kids, and even his TV as a result of his fanatical devotion to his team. The basketball (highlights from a fictional seven-game N.B.A. finals) overshadows the drama, which takes place smack in the middle of the games (literally: the alley-oop passes sail right over the TV-room couch). But the athlete-actors pull off Globetrotter high jinks right on cue, the cheerleaders dance with exaggerated licentiousness, and the accompanying jock interviews and talk-radio postmortems are both on target and hilariously over the top. In an especially appropriate touch, the play has two endings, depending on whether or not the final shot goes in. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

Benny the Blaster
SHARKS
23
RIM ROCKA
HOME
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"Joe Fearless (a Fan Dance)," a basketball drama with music, written by Liz Tuccillo.

MARK TODD

JUDITH SHAKESPEARE COMPANY
A gender-reversed staging of "Julius Caesar" in repertory with a Prohibition-era version of "The Comedy of Errors." (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 352-8887. Closes July 22.)

KISS ME, KATE
With all its admirable expertise and its various delights, this production of the Cole Porter musical is oddly earthbound: it comes down to the vexing issue of chemistry. The leads, Marin Mazzie and Brian Stokes Mitchell, are expert players, but they are not—in the true meaning of the words—star performers. (11/29/99) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE LARAMIE PROJECT
A drama about the murder of gay-hate victim Matthew Shepard, written and directed by Moisés Kaufman. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

THE LONG, SLOW DEATH OF LILA REMY
A solo theatre piece about unrequited love, Hollywood, and other obsessions, written and performed by Toni Schlesinger. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., at Spring St. 647-0202.)

MEASURE FOR MEASURE
The Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival begins its summer season. (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. For ticket information and directions, call 914-265-9575. Closes July 30.)

THE MUSIC MAN
A delightful revival of Meredith Willson's 1957 musical, directed by Susan Stroman and starring Craig Bierko, who is making his Broadway début in the role of Professor Harold Hill. The show hits us with the simplicity and seamlessness of a perfect fairy tale, and it puts music in its proper place—right up there with all the other miracles of life. (5/22/00) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

NEIL SIMON'S HOTEL SUITE
A bride locks herself in the bathroom on her wedding day. A man wakes up in a hotel room with a strange woman passed out in his bed and his wife on the way. An aging actress adores her bisexual antique-dealer husband, but his interest in men might prevail. The setups for these reheated fragments from Simon's "Suite" plays have the feel of stale seventies sitcoms, but they rate high on the middle-aged crowd's Laff-O-Meter and capture, however unwittingly, the innocence and humor of decades past. The cast (Helen Carey, Randy Graff, Leigh Lawson, Ron Orbach, Charlie McWade, and Amanda Serkasevich) all shine in their own ways. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

THE PICTURE
This new translation, by Abigail Sanders, of Eugène Ionesco's 1963 inquiry into the transformative power of art (and the limits of that power) is both intellectually intriguing and very funny. The two lead performances, by Tony Torn, as a rich businessman, and Tom Pearl, as a painter, employ the bombastic and subtle styles of comic acting, respectively, and Ian Belton's direction is perfectly paced. (Cha, 135 W. 42nd St. 206-7188. Closes July 22.)

PROOF
The young playwright David Auburn's drama stars Mary-Louise Parker as the daughter of a brilliant University of Chicago mathematician, whose life and career began to disintegrate in his mid-twenties when he became mentally ill. Parker's character appears to have similar gifts and, possibly, similar troubles, and Parker skillfully delivers the smart and sullen, insolent and indolent goods. You wish the play were a little richer, a little less simply resolved, but its level of accomplishment and the realness of its characters show that Auburn has both depth and a voice. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes July 30.)

THE REAL THING
Revived here with an excellent cast (especially Stephen Dillane) and subtle direction by David Leveaux, Tom Stoppard's 1984 drama remains the wittiest, sharpest look at that twisted thing called love to come around in decades. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

THE RIDE DOWN MT. MORGAN
"Why have I been condemned?" the aptly named bigamist Lyman Felt (Patrick Stewart) asks, rather whinily, toward the end of Arthur Miller's latest play, an examination of the seeming impossibility of fidelity, or, at least, lifelong marriage. And you trust that Lyman is truly in the dark about how he could be convicted of having love for two women. The problem with Miller's project is that his lying Lyman is no longer in love with his first wife at all, and he seems to have only lust for the second. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. Closes July 23.)

THE RIDICU-FEST
A festival of camp comedies by playwrights both familiar (Charles Busch, Charles Ludlam, Ethyl Eichelberger) and little known (John Issendorf, Todd Miller). (For schedule and location information, call 420-1466. Closes July 23.)

RIVERDANCE
The Irish troupe of dancers, singers, and musicians. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER
John Travolta is not easy to replace, nor are the ashes of disco fever likely to reignite, as this show, based on the 1977 movie, demonstrates. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

SWING!
No plot, just a hot band, Olympic-class dancers, and major panties—this show, a tribute to swing and its dance counterpart, the Lindy (mother of the jitterbug), lives up to its name. Directed and choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

TRUE WEST
A sensational revival of Sam Shepard's 1980 play, directed by Matthew Warchus. It's a droll tall tale of sibling rivalry, in which an intrusive, beer-swilling outlaw named Lee and his brother, Austin, a put-upon Ivy League screenwriter, face off in their vacationing mother's tidy modern kitchen. Josh Brolin and Elias Koteas have taken over the starring roles. (3/27/00) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

UBU IS KING!
Free outdoor theatre from the Gorilla Rep—an adaptation of Alfred Jarry's "Ubu Roi." Fridays at 8, Saturdays at 8 and 10, and Sundays at 6 and 8. (Washington Square Park. For more information, call 330-8086.)

WHEN THEY SPEAK OF RITA
Daisy B. Foote's drama, about a discontented housewife in rural New Hampshire. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-3052.)

THE WINTER'S TALE
The New York Shakespeare Festival's first outdoor production of the season. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750. Closes July 16.)

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.
CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.
CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
DINNER WITH FRIENDS
Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave.,
at 14th St. 239-6200.
FORBIDDEN BROADWAY
Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.
FOSSE
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
JACKIE MASON: MUCH ADO ABOUT EVERYTHING
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
Closes July 30.
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.
THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

"IN SPITE OF WISHING AND WANTING"
For the Lincoln Center Festival, the Belgian choreographer Wim Vandekeybus collaborates with the composer and musician David Byrne on an evening-length work for ten men (sometimes in skirts), which uses natural athletic movements, falling, diving, fighting, embracing—and a lot of feathers—to explore basic longings: for sleep, partnership, and dominance. (LaGuardia Concert Hall, Amsterdam Ave. at 65th St. 721-6500. July 11 and July 13-14 at 8.)

PILOBOLUS DANCE THEATRE
For its annual monthlong engagement, the six-member company presents three programs, each of which includes three repertory works and a première. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. July 12-14 and July 17-18 at 8 and July 15 at 2 and 8. Through July 22.)

DANCES FOR WAVE HILL
The annual outdoor series of site-specific works commissioned for the Bronx garden by Dancing in the Streets opens with three pieces: "Double E," by Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, "Descend/Ascend," a duet by Guta Hedewig created with the garden's gentle slope in mind, and an installation of old saws, clay pots, pipes, pans, and other percussion instruments, introduced by an inaugural piece composed and played by Terry Dame and the Junkyard Gamelan. (675 W. 252nd St., the Bronx. 718-549-3200. July 12 and 19 at 6:30 and July 16 at 5.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA
The eleven-member company, under the direction of Martin Santangelo, opens its summer engagement, with new work ("La Plaza," in which competing flamenco stylists meet and trade steps at a marketplace) in addition to its satisfying repertory of traditional forms: *alegrías, farrucas,* and, best of all, the *soleá,* performed by Soledad Barrio, who can transform the most demanding passages of percussive footwork into reflective turns of great sadness and introspection. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. 279-4200. July 12-15 at 8 and July 16 at 5.)

HUDSON RIVER FESTIVAL
The free series in Battery Park City. July 18 at 7: Pucci Sport, under the direction of Pilobolus veteran Peter Pucci, makes dance out of sport, choreographing basketball, hockey, boxing, and surfing, by turns. (Winter Garden, in the World Financial Center.)

"AN EVENING OF DANCE PERFORMANCES"
Five works by as many choreographers: "Weaving Through the Grid," by Karl Anderson; "A Good Man Falls," by Jennine Durning; "The Monsoon Orchestra," by Jennifer Monson; an untitled work by Jon Kinzel; and "The Romance," by Eva Lawrence, who also curated the evening. (Galapagos, 70 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. 718-309-5502. July 15 at 9.)

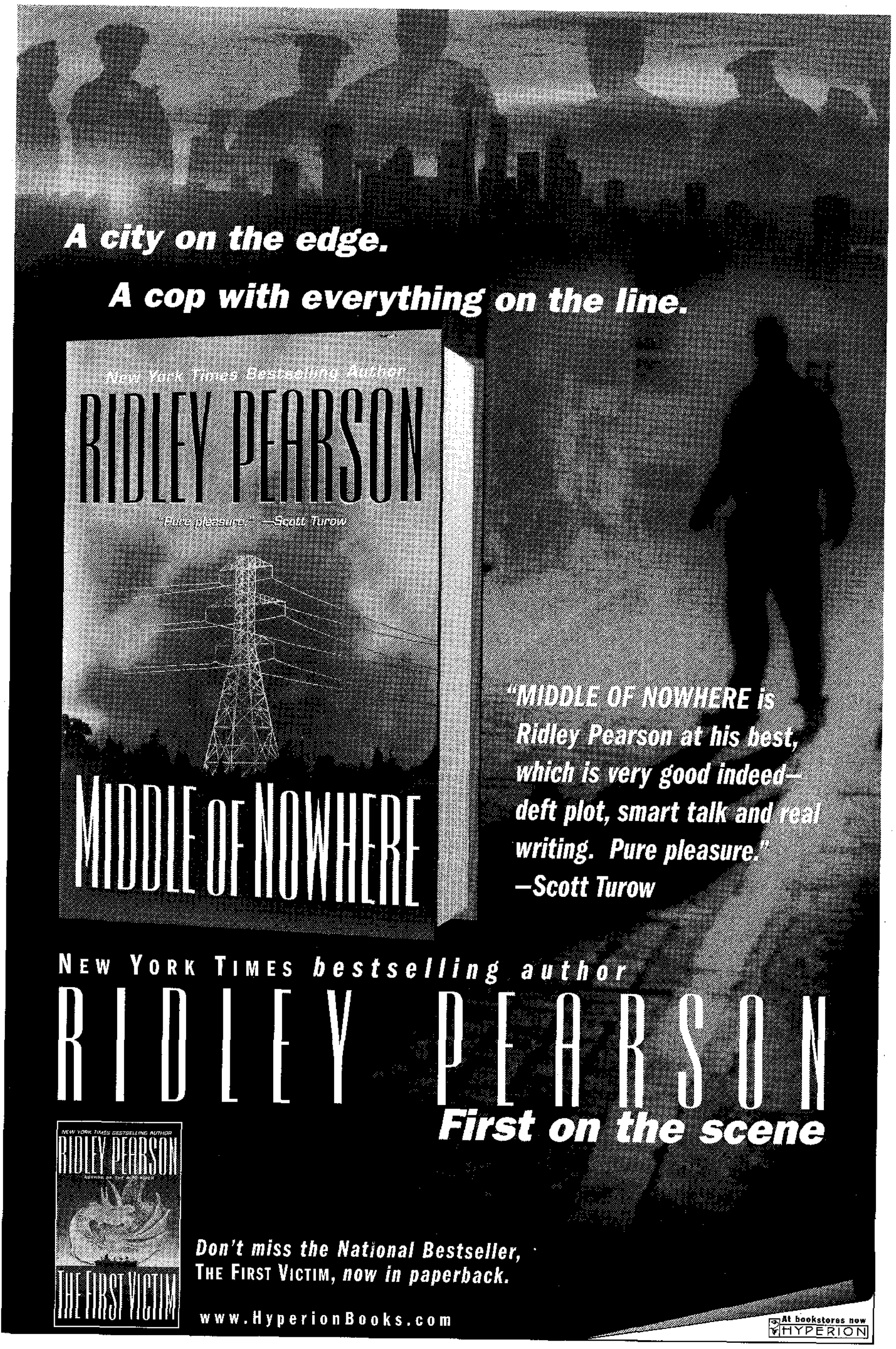
OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL
July 11-14 at 8, July 15 at 2 and 8, and July 16 at 2: Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. ♦ July 13-14 at 8:15 and July 15-16 at 5: Ronald K. Brown/Evidence. (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 413-243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

MIRIAM MAKEBA / TERRY CALLIER
The great South African singer and anti-apartheid activist, perhaps best known for her work in the Broadway musical "Sarafina!" and her appearance on Paul Simon's "Graceland" tour, returns to town to perform songs from her new studio album, "Homeland." / The jazz and folk veteran Callier has a thickly layered voice that's a perfect match for his accomplished guitar playing. (Central Park SummerStage, mid-Park at 72nd St. No tickets necessary. For more information, call 360-2777. July 12 at 7:30.)

MUSIC IN THE ANCHORAGE
The cool caverns on the eastern side of the Brooklyn Bridge are home to a concert series presented by the arts-advocacy group Creative Time. July 13 at 10: **Smith & Mighty** and **A Guy Called Gerald.** Before Portishead, Tricky, and Massive Attack secured shelf space at chain record stores across the country, Smith & Mighty were hard at work in Bristol pioneering down-tempo trip-hop. A legal snarl with a major label kept the group from releasing any albums in the early nineties, but they did manage to put out the seminal "Bass Is Maternal" on their own in 1995. Their recent follow-up, "Big World Small World," is an ambitious combination of reggae, break beats, and politics. / A Guy Called Gerald is an English jungle pioneer, whose latest work


A city on the edge.
A cop with everything on the line.
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"Pure pleasure." —Scott Turow
MIDDLE OF NOWHERE
"MIDDLE OF NOWHERE is Ridley Pearson at his best, which is very good indeed—deft plot, smart talk and real writing. Pure pleasure." —Scott Turow
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stretches the boundaries of dance music. His forthcoming release, "Essence," features vocal contributions from Lady Miss Kier, of Deee-Lite fame, and Lamb vocalist Louise Rhodes. ♦ July 14 at 10: An evening of ecstatic, futuristic dance music which fuses an ancient Punjabi harvest festival with the technological wonders of underground London, as d.j. **Rekkha**, of Basement Bhangra, and others spice up the infectious *dohl* drumbeat with pinches of classical raga, old-school hip-hop, dub reggae, and the occasional car-crash sound or Malcolm X sample. (Cadman Plaza West, at Hicks and Front Sts., Brooklyn. For more information, call 212-206-6674, ext. 251. The series continues through July 23.)

CHICAGO
More summer hits to stir the memory banks. (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. July 14 at 7:30.)

JOHN SCOFIELD BAND / ANTIBALAS
Jazz-guitar hero Scofield can't be accused of being a Johnny-come-lately to the funk bandwagon. He's been indulging his love of R. & B. on and off since his career began, more than twenty-five years ago. Now that jazz-funk is suddenly the rage with a whole new generation of players, Scofield can wear his crown with pride. / Antibalas is a fourteen-piece multiracial Afro-beat ensemble from Williamsburg, Brooklyn, which takes its musical and political inspiration from Fela Kuti. Its shows are a thunderous mass of rhythms, horns, and bass. If ever there was a reason to visit the borough of kings, this is it. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park West at 9th St., Brooklyn. For more information, call 718-855-7882, ext. 45. July 14 at 7:30.)

FUNK 'N' LATA
Straight from Rio, this twenty-piece percussion ensemble mixes old-school samba with contemporary hip-hop beats. Also on the bill is the Brazilian-born downtown guitar hero **Arto Lindsay**, who will be right at home onstage with **Nação Zumbi**, a Brazilian band that produces a combination of electric guitar, tape loops, rapping, and drumming known as the mangrove beat. (Central Park SummerStage. No tickets necessary. July 15 at 3.)

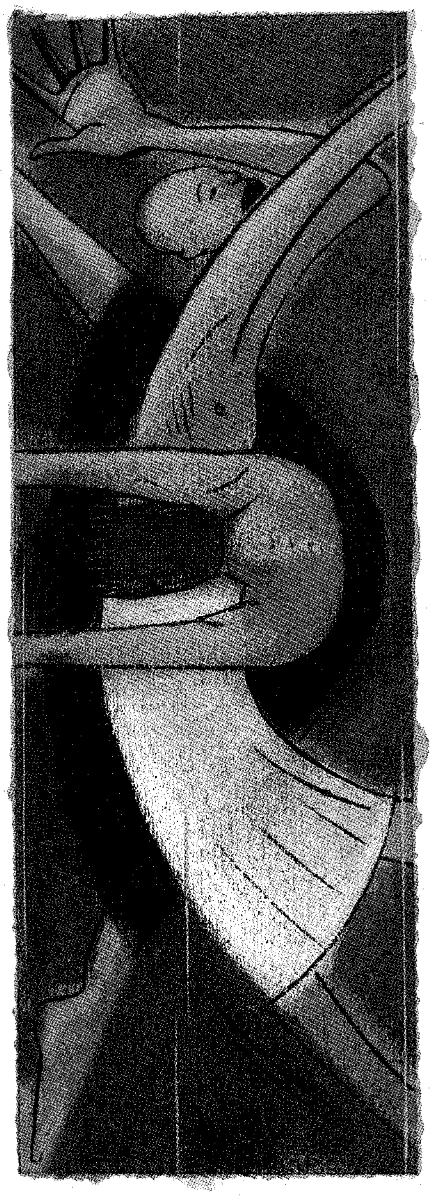
"UP IN SMOKE TOUR"
The lineup may sound like characters from a children's cartoon, but rappers **Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Ice Cube,** and **Eminem** are anything but a joke. Reports from the road indicate that this show is full of professionalism, spectacle, and imagination, three words that are not often applied to live hip-hop performances. (Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. July 15 at 7.)

"ELECTRONIC EVOLUTION 4"
In a concert subtitled "The Turntable as an Ensemble Instrument," many of today's finest turntablists, including Christian Marclay, DJ Frankie, and the X-ecutioners, offer their take on John Cage's "Imaginary Landscapes No. 5," as well as original compositions. A part of the Lincoln Center Festival. (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. 875-5030. July 15 at 9.)

BASTILLE DAY FESTIVAL
Celebrate the national holiday of republican France at an outdoor block party with **Barbez,** a Brooklyn band that produces woozy café rock. Elements of klezmer, French musette, punk, and tango are bound together by haunting vibraphones and a mesmerizing accordion redolent of dripping candles. Also performing is **Les Sans Culottes,** another Kings County ensemble that plays raunchy faux-French rock and roll that's both a sendup of and a tribute to the dark tunes of late-period Serge Gainsbourg and punchy *yé-yé* girl pop. They put on a very silly show, going so far as to perform in frilly underthings. (Orchard St., between Houston and Stanton Sts. No tickets necessary. For more information, call 226-9010. July 16 starting at 1.)

LES NUBIANS
The sisters Hélène and Celia Faussart, who were raised in Bordeaux (with a brief sojourn in Chad), reupholster American hip-hop and jazz with a severe Continental chic. The duo's sophisticated stylings do for pop music what Catherine Deneuve did for umbrellas. (Central Park SummerStage. July 16 at 3.)

IDA
The careful harmonies and emotionally incisive lyrics of this Brooklyn-based quartet are powerful enough to send a chill down the spine of the most jaded listener. The band, which was a not so well-kept secret of the indie-rock world during most of the nineties, recently went through a courtship and an engagement with the major label Capitol. The affair ended poorly, with the band lucky enough to get the rights to its own material. The independent label Tigerstyle picked them up, and this evening's performance celebrates the release of their new disk, "Will You Find Me." (Angel Orensanz Center, 172 Norfolk St. 307-7171. July 18 at 8.)



"In Spite of Wishing and Wanting," at the Lincoln Center Festival (see Dance).

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

"JAZZ IN JULY"
Pianist **Marian McPartland** and trumpeter **Joe Wilder** aren't the first names that spring to mind when considering a tribute to cool jazz, but the chance to see those two ever-shining stars of mainstream jazz along with some younger practitioners, including **Bill Charlap, Jack Stuckey,** and **Harry Allen,** is not to be missed. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. July 18 at 8.)

MEREDITH MONK
The first of a three-concert retrospective in the Lincoln Center Festival. Monk appears here with pianist Nurit Tilles. (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. 875-5030. July 18 at 8.)

MIDSUMMER NIGHT SWING
Topnotch zydeco with **Step Rideau.** (Fountain Plaza, Lincoln Center. For more information, call 875-5766. July 18 at 8:15. Dance lessons are offered at 6:30.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
243 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—July 14: **Levon Helm.** The former Band drummer/vocalist and sometime actor ("Coal Miner's Daughter") comes to town with his rootsy pedigree and a deep back catalogue of material.

LA BELLE ÉPOQUE
827 Broadway, at 13th St. (254-6436)—July 15: **Step Rideau** (see Concerts—Midsummer Night Swing).

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—July 14: **Del McCoury,** former lead singer of Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys and current chair of one of the country's most electrifying bluegrass bands, featuring sons **Ronnie** and **Robbie** on mandolin and banjo, fiddler **Tad Marks,** and bassist **Mike Brantly.** With country-blues performer **Roy Book Binder.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—July 14: For truly mindless fun, there's **Arling & Cameron,** a producing-and-composing duo from Amsterdam. They have collaborated with Pizzicato Five and Fantastic Plastic Machine, and last year they released "All In," which successfully mimicked the lightweight essence of late-nineties Japanese pop. They return with "Music for Imaginary Films," a series of "soundtracks" which incorporates everything from French pop and samba to disco and the sounds of Bollywood. July 17: **Robert Bradley's Blackwater Surprise.** Bradley, a blind former street busker from Alabama by way of Detroit, turned to Motor City star of the moment Kid Rock for help on two tracks of the band's latest album, "Time to Discover." Let's give it up for Rock, if only for the commercial cachet his name brings Bradley, whose tight band deserves as wide an audience as possible: it moves effortlessly among styles, from Motown-inflected R. & B. to driving Texas-style blues to traditional soul. But Bradley has such a haunting gravel-and-silk voice that the band's solid musicianship is nearly upstaged on each song.

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—July 14: Old '97's guitarist **Rhett Miller.** The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—July 13: **Shelby Lynne.** This renegade cowgirl grew up with tragedy. When she was seventeen her father shot and killed her mother before turning the gun on himself. After her career in Nashville yielded only five CDs of pedestrian country pop, she quit Music City and returned to her home town in Alabama. The change has done her good. Her latest album, "I Am Shelby Lynne," was recorded with Sheryl Crow producer Bill Bottrell, and its caterwauling back-porch blues and Memphis horns suggest Al Green at the Grand Ole Opry, earning her fans as diverse as the Black Crowes' Chris Robinson and rapper Jay-Z. ♦ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—July 15: **Diamanda Galás.** For those who don't belong to the cult of Galás, her bilingual ululation suggests a woman alternately possessed by the spirits of Tina Turner, Yoko Ono, and an S & M dominatrix. July 17: **Funk 'n' Lata** (see Concerts). July 18: The singer-songwriter **Nona Hendryx** is a regal, buff performer, always ready to bare her psyche.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—July 14-15: **Luna.** Led by Harvard grad Dean Wareham, who drove Galaxie 500 to college-rock greatness, this New York

quartet makes a dreamy kind of music so frankly derivative that it's both disposable and eternal.

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (601-1000)—July 19: **Lucy Kaplansky,** a self-proclaimed folk hybrid of Tammy Wynette and Elaine from "Seinfeld," rides high on the success of "Ten Year Night," her most recent studio recording and the first since she dropped her New York City-based private psychology practice to record and focus on her music full time. A truly gifted performer, Kaplansky burns through a bubbly, modest stage persona with strong flat picking and a bag full of enchanting songs.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Wednesdays this month belong to **Jack Lukeman,** a former auto mechanic turned Emerald Isle pop phenom. Lukeman, a noirish balladeer reminiscent of Nick Cave, who has described his performances as "adrenaline, testosterone-fuelled stupidity," has been twice voted Dublin's sexiest man. Expect a melodramatic, over-the-top show featuring songs from his album "Metropolis Blue," which was recently released here on the Razor & Tie label.

SHINE
285 West Broadway, at Canal St. (941-0900)—July 17: The genetically engineered bossa-nova singer **Bebel Gilberto** (her dad is João Gilberto) makes a rare appearance. Her latest album, "Tanto Tempo," was recently released here, and it features contributions from some of the electronic-music world's top artists, such as Amon Tobin and the Thievery Corporation. The result is a subtle updating of a classic form.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—July 16: **The Kurstins,** a husband-and-wife duo from Los Angeles comprised of keyboardist Greg and theremin player Pamela. The pair are veterans of the West Coast jazz scene, and while they can, with a little drum programming, turn out straight-ahead jazz (the theremin can sound uncannily like an upright bass), their work leans more toward the delightfully eccentric pop one would expect from a group based on an instrument known chiefly for adding ambience to old sci-fi films.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—July 13-15: For many jazz-vocal connoisseurs, **Mark Murphy** is the man. A paragon of the art of vocal improvisation since the fifties, Murphy is still more than willing to transform both standards and obscurities into his personal property, as he proves on his new album, "Some Time Ago." Dining.

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through July 16: The **Ernie Watts** quartet. One of the great romantics of the tenor saxophone, Watts has been the backbone of Charlie Haden's Quartet West for years now. He balances a fondness for Coltrane-like effusions with a grand, singing tone. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

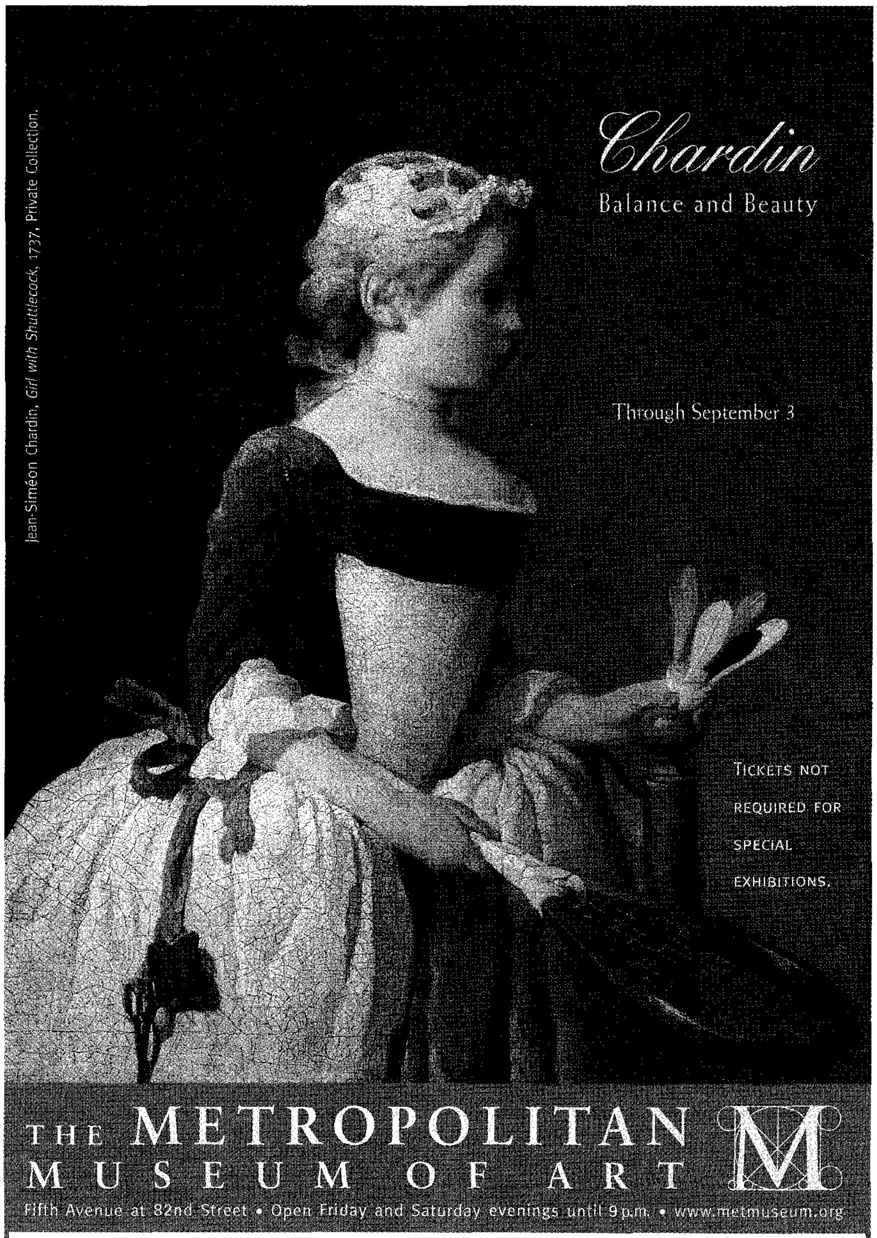
JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through July 16: The **Jason Moran** trio. You can still hear plenty of his mentors—Andrew Hill, Richard Muhal Abrams, and Jaki Byard—in Moran's piano playing, and more power to him. Channelling the spikier styles of those deep individualists has allowed Moran to stay clear of the tired Herbie Hancockisms that cloud the work of his peers. Moran has an enviable rapport with his rhythm team of **Tarus Mateen** on bass and **Nasheet Waits** on drums, which enlivens both his new recording, "Facing Left," and his galvanic live appearances. Dining.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—July 13-14: Odds are good that no matter what new ensemble trumpeter and composer **Dave Douglas** is presenting, the payoff will be a fascinating and vital mix of venerable jazz traditions and cutting-edge daring. Witness is the name of his latest group.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through July 16: **Jane Monheit.** It's nice to see the Vanguard making room for vocalists, and just as encouraging that the venerable club is welcoming up-and-coming singers like Monheit, a promising stylist with sure instincts who'll have an all-star ensemble backing her. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds court on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—Mention eighteenth-century French painting to most people and they will think of the rosy coquetries of Boucher or Fragonard. But, unlike his peers, Jean-Siméon Chardin devoted himself to simple still-lifes and domestic scenes, creamy works of such beauty that the philosopher Diderot was moved to write, "The magic is incomprehensible." The painter captures his human subjects in moments of quiet reverie, and the show casts a similar spell. The still-lifes contain a surprising amount of dead game (after all, the French for "still-life" is "*nature morte*"), and the most influential example, surely, is "The Ray." The gutted fish with the ghoulish grin inspired copies by Van Gogh and Cézanne; Soutine's variation on the theme is on view downstairs in the "Painters in Paris" show. But this early work, which earned the young artist membership in the prestigious Académie Royale, is a rare example of Chardin as showoff. On the whole, his work is marked by a grace and dignity that reveal the miraculous in the everyday. Through Sept. 3. ♦ **"Other Pictures: Vernacular Photographs from the Thomas Walther Collection."** The great American photographer Alfred Stieglitz once warned amateur shutterbugs, "Don't believe you became an artist the instant you received a gift Kodak on Christmas morning."

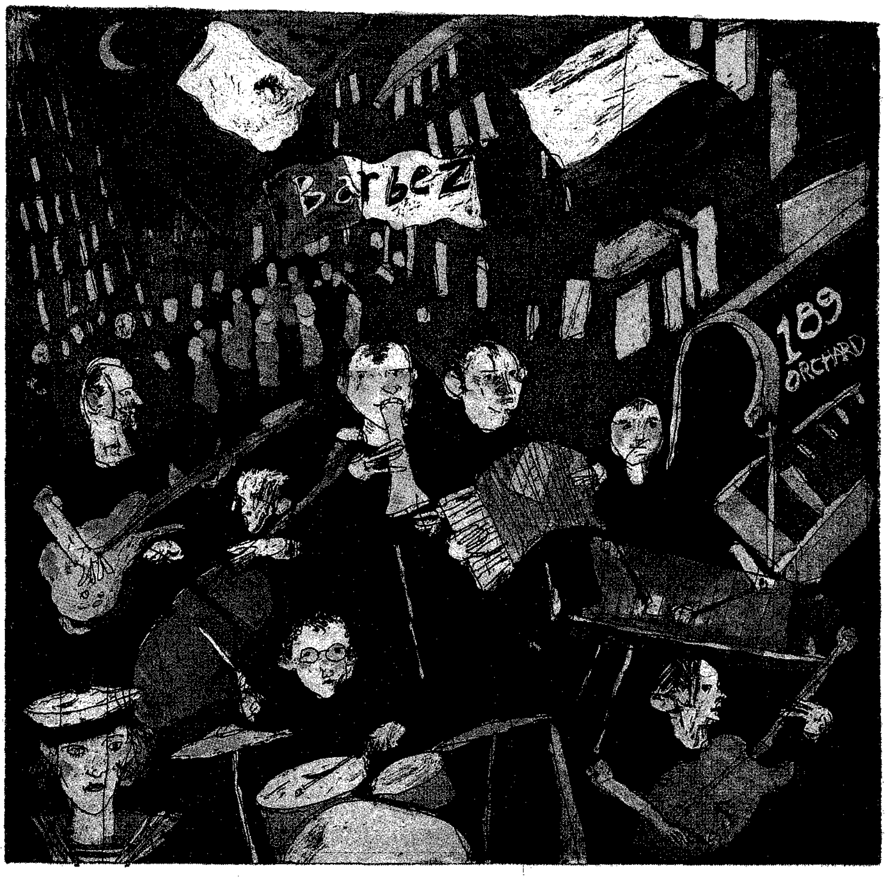


Jean-Siméon Chardin, *Girl with Shuttlecock*, 1737, Private Collection.

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street • Open Friday and Saturday evenings until 9 p.m. • www.metmuseum.org

Made possible by The Florence Gould Foundation.
Organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris, the Kunstmuseum and Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf, and the Royal Academy of Arts, London. Indemnity granted by the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.
Hear the exhibition on ▶ KEY TO THE MET AUDIO GUIDE sponsored by Bloomberg NEWS

But, as this selection of black-and-white snapshots demonstrates, sometimes luck beats skill and art wins out. Most of the photographs were discovered at flea markets; many could easily pass for work by masters like Henri Cartier-Bresson, Walker Evans, or Diane Arbus. A happy accident, *like the pictures themselves.* Through Aug. 27. ♦ It's the Fourth of July all summer long at **"Fireworks!: Four Centuries of Pyrotechnics in Prints and Drawings,"** an exhibition from the museum's permanent collection. The explosive entertainment on view includes images of sixteenth-century reënactments of military victories and the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge. Some of the best works focus not on the fireworks themselves but on the audience reactions, including Honoré Daumier's snarky family of three caught in a Parisian downpour and Winslow Homer's enraptured crowd in Central Park. Through Sept. 17. ♦ **"American Modern, 1925-40: Design for a New Age."** Through Jan. 7. ♦ **John Singer Sargent: Beyond the Portrait Studio."** Paintings, drawings, and watercolors from the collection. Through Sept. 24. ♦ **"Now! Modern Photographs from the Permanent Collection."** Through Oct. 22. ♦ **"After Nicolas Poussin: New Etchings by Leon Kossoff."** Through Aug. 13. ♦ **"Art and Oracle: Spirit Voices of Africa."** Through July 30. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)



Celebrate Bastille Day with the sounds of Barbez (see Night Life—Concerts).

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"Projects 72: John Armleder/Piotr Uklański"** presents two installations based on disco theatrics: Armleder has hung and spotlit a dozen whirling mirrored balls in the MOMA café, and Uklański has set up a sound-activated, illuminated dance floor in the sculpture garden. Through Sept. 5 and Aug. 1, respectively. ♦ **"Making Choices."** The twenty-four-part show concentrates on works made between 1920 and 1960, drawn exclusively from the museum's extensive holdings, in a series of tightly focussed exhibitions, several devoted to a single artist (Man Ray, Cartier-Bresson, Morandi). Closing, in stages, on Aug. 22, Sept. 19, and Sept. 26. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"1900: Art at the Crossroads"** reopens a sort of art-world time capsule, *contrasting representative works from* the movements that took shape at the beginning of the past century. Established masters (Bouguereau, Burne-Jones, Degas, Eakins, Gauguin, and Munch) are displayed near the upstarts of the day (Kandinsky, Matisse, Mondrian, and Picasso). Through Sept. 10. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—**"The Art of Alice Neel."** The artist (1900-84) enjoyed little critical success for most of her career, which took her from Cuba to Greenwich Village to Spanish Harlem before landing her a guest spot with Johnny Carson in the seventies. Neel had long turned to friends and family as subjects (one of the show's highlights is an early portrait of bohemian gadfly Joe Gould which gives new meaning to the phrase "well endowed"). But in the late fifties, allegedly at the suggestion of her therapist, she began inviting art-world figures like poet-critic Frank O'Hara and then-painter Robert Smithson to sit for her, donning the mantle of artist's artist. The tidal wave of Abstract Expressionism had crested, and the renewed interest in the figure worked to the advantage of an artist who had never veered from realism. Neel's warts-and-all approach is a far cry from the glamourizing of that other great American portraitist, Sargent, but, while her portaits rarely flatter the sitter, their intensity and intimacy are unrivalled. Through Sept. 17. ♦ **"Carnival Strippers: Photographs by Susan Meiselas."** Through Sept. 10. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—The Triassic equivalent of professional wrestling is here: **"Fighting Dinosaurs"** showcases one of the greatest paleontological finds of the past century. In the Gobi Desert almost thirty years ago, a Polish-Mongolian team came across the remains of two dinosaurs, a carnivorous velociraptor and a vegetarian protoceratops, apparently caught in a brawl *to the death. More recent finds, including early* mammals and new links between dinosaurs and birds, are also on view, along with video projections, a diorama, and chip-away re-creations of digs. Through Oct. 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Besides being the charismatic teacher of Hopper and O'Keeffe, among others, William Merritt Chase is remembered as the top-hatted dandy who inaugurated American Impressionism in Long Island's Shinnecock Hills. Before he moved there, in 1890, however, Chase spent five summers in Brooklyn, painting plein-air landscapes of Prospect Park, the Gowanus Bay, and other sites. On display not far from where they were painted, these thirty-five small, spacious oils and pastels show women from another era strolling around familiar lawns and ponds. Part of the fascination of the show is in Chase's own stylistic vacillation between sketchy, gray tone poems and grassy, sunstruck reportage. On a cloudy day, Chase was Whistler; on a sunny one, he was Pissarro. Through Aug. 13. ♦ **"Dream Days: The Art of Maxfield Parrish."** Through Aug. 6. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (534-1672)—**"Under the El: City Life in Twentieth-Century Prints and Drawings."** Charles Harvey, who owned the Westside and Yonkers Patent Railway Company, started construction on the first elevated train in 1867; by the First World War the system was transporting a million and a half passengers a day. This nineteen-piece exhibit begins with several distant, even elevated portrayals of the tracks: they *look sublime and imposing in Charles Frederick* William Mielatz's "Cherry Street" and stylish and architecturally refined in Max Mongel's "Lincoln Square." By the end of the war, though, the perspective had shifted, and many painters chose to depict the underside of the El, whose thick, black girders cast dark shadows on the despondent pedestrians, as in Philip Reisman's "Peddler Under the 'L.' " From the current era, William Behnken's pencil drawing "Light/Steel/Air" demonstrates the structure's ghostly and largely forgotten remnants. Through Oct. 8. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM

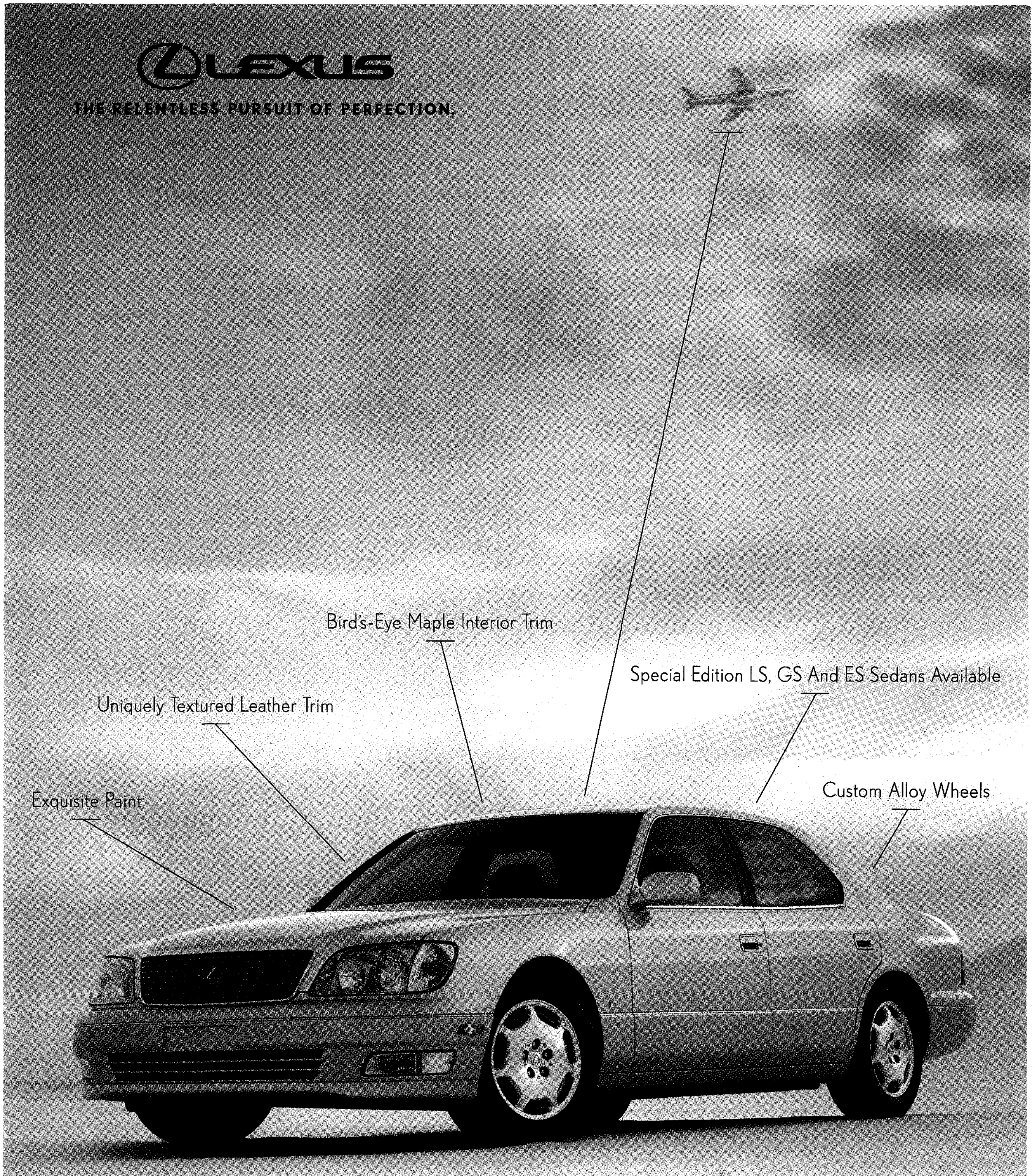
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (369-4880)—**"American Spectrum: Paintings and Sculpture from the Smith College Museum of Art."** Because of renovations, Smith has sent this seventy-five-piece show on the road. The selection includes more than two hundred and fifty years' worth of American art, from John Singleton Copley's stoic oil "The Honorable John Erving" (circa 1772) to Donald Sultan's lyrical "Ferry Sept. 17, 1987," made from tar, Spackle, and latex on tile over Masonite. A third of the travelling exhibition features current or former Academicians, including three worthies—Wolf Kahn, Neil Welliver, and Janet Fish—who were added just for this stop. Through Sept. 10. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5, and Fridays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Summer hours: unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

JAMES LEE BYARS

The late artist, who died in 1997, spent extensive periods in Japan and made his art along the lines of a Zen koan: perplexing but enticing. This show of three works has a decided funereal quality,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owing, no doubt, to the inclusion of "The Perfect Death," a laurel wreath of black Venetian glass encircling the title phrase, which is scrawled in gold on black silk paper. Through Aug. 11. (Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 988-1623.)

BETSABÉE ROMERO
What is it with women artists and cars? First there was Sarah Lucas's cigarette-upholstered wreck, then Michelle Lopez's leather number at P.S. 1 and Kim Dingle's menstruating M.G. Midget in the Biennial. Now comes Mexican artist Romero in her New York début, whose centerpiece is a whimsical Volkswagen Beetle, its body almost entirely replaced with colorful cast-off materials. A painted wooden door, its glass knob intact, adorns the driver's side beside a fender made entirely of flattened aluminum cans. Elsewhere, Romero gives Richard Prince a run for his money, rendering traditional ex-voto paintings on car hoods in lieu of tin. Through Sept. 1. (Galeria Ramis Barquet, 41 E. 57th St. 644-9090.)

Brazilian chanteuse Bebel Gilberto, appearing at Shine (see Night Life—Clubs).

MARC HOM

Short List

EUGENIE BAIZERMAN
Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223.
Through July 28.

STAN DANN
Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 987-4997.
Through July 21.

DONALD SULTAN
Mary Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669.
Through July 28.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ROBERTO JUAREZ
A magnificent exhibition of large paintings that reflect the new, outrageous face of construction outside the artist's Times Square studio. Having modified both the scale and content of his paintings of late, from modest and representational to monumental and abstract, Juarez pulls off a transformation that would make most artist's knees knock. With mediums as varied as acrylic paint, urethane, rice paper, gesso, ink, and peat moss, Juarez's canvases vibrate with dizzying whorls of multicolored lines and pods, their shifting geometries suggesting confused building plans, insane football formations, or, alternately, microscopic structures and mandalas. "Times Square Tiles," a huge, single-panel work, shows Juarez at his loosest and, paradoxically, his most controlled. Layering a high-energy kaleidoscope of painted strings and dots over a translucent background, he illustrates F. Scott Fitzgerald's literary maxim: first-rate minds are able to contain two conflicting ideas at once. Through July 28. (Robert Miller, 524 W 26th St. 366-4774.)

"TOMORROW"
A multimedia group exhibition that includes eight of New York's most promising bright young artists. Guy Richards Smit's video sendup of the invented rock-'n'-roll star Maxi Geil (German for "superhorny") and his band PlayColt! features the artist mouthing the anti-love song "I Will Leave You First." Ryan McGinness has titled his large wood panel of bayonet-wielding plastic soldiers "Saving Ryan's Privates." Candice Breitz's two-loop digital-video installation "Double Olivia" samples images and sound from the movie "Grease," turning Newton-John and John Travolta into unwitting electronica performers. The show brims with black humor, the better to tarnish some of America's sappiest cultural icons. Through July 28. (RareArt, 435 W. 14th St. 645-5591.)

Short List

FERNANDO RODRIGUEZ
Liebman Magnan, 552 W. 24th St.
255-3225. Through July 28.

SIMON UNGERS
Urbach Architecture, 526 W. 26th St.
627-0974. Through July 21.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

ELLEN BERKENBLIT
Winsome reveries disguised as drawings and paintings, populated by lions and tigers and bears and a ubiquitous brown-haired sylph. The drawings have the dreamy haze of an afternoon nap, while the paintings—equal parts abstraction and depiction—have a lyrical ferocity. Their jagged brushstrokes and vivid palette recall Kandinsky by way of early Walt Disney. A charming show. Through July 14. (Kern, 558 Broadway. 965-1706.)

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN
These tangles of chrome and enamelled metal immediately recall auto wreckage, a manner the artist has cultivated since 1957. He continues to find subtlety in this wreckage: his latest variation, painting the metal with creamy enamels *before* crushing, adds painterly lushness to his curling, collapsing forms. Through July 14. (Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224.)

"ANYWHERE BUT HERE"
This surprisingly large and refreshingly focussed show germinated when its curators noticed a "preponderance of artistic production fueled by air-travel themes." Trepid passengers may want to begin by reading the emergency-procedure information cards for the airlines of the world, collected and tacked to the wall by Andrew Bordwin. Others will charge through a metal-detector-like gate to a roomful of model planes and landing videos, to the tune of Brian Eno's "Ambient Music for Airports." On one wall, Nina Katchadourian's family tree of jets and blimps traces visual rather than mechanical lines of descent, leading eventually to an inflated Tostitos balloon in a store parking lot. On another, Gary Rough's series of "Air Traffic Control" photos show a young man turning the radio controls for a battery-powered plane on a passing jumbo jet, which rumbles by unaffected. Two smaller spaces offer clothing designed on the theme of "Transitional Home," and D'Nell Larson's "Personal Space," a room glittering with iridescent sequins strung on hundreds of fishing lines. Through July 22. (Artist's Space, 38 Greene St. 226-3970.)

Short List

KEVIN WIXTED
Beitzel, 102 Prince St. 219-2863.
Through July 14.

PHOTOGRAPHY

ELLIOTT ERWITT
Erwitt has made a career—and quite a celebrated one—out of treating the events around him with a certain wry humor. "Museum Watching" documents his lifelong interest in the dynamic between observers and works of art; the show includes photographs from the nineteen-fifties to the pres-

ent, of sites as diverse as the pyramids of Giza, the Great Wall of China, the Louvre, and the American Museum of Natural History. Viewers can revel not only in its drollery but in the additional frisson of seeing themselves (or at least versions of themselves) represented in his photos. Through Aug. 11. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070.)

ONLY CONNECT

DOG BYTES, MAN

A dog has never been President. A dog has never played major-league baseball or topnotch jazz. A dog has never trotted into a college lecture hall and interrupted the professor with a brilliant question about operating on the vacuum state to create field quanta. But dogs own the summer months, from the end of spring right up to the edge of fall—and slowly but surely they are taking over the Internet as well.

The **American Kennel Club** maintains a breed list (www.akc.org/breeds/index.cfm) of the hundred and forty-eight recognized types of purebred dog, from the affenpinscher (a German wirehair originally used as a mouser in stables, kitchens, and granaries) to the Yorkshire terrier (the familiar longhair, whose weight must not exceed seven pounds). The breed rankings (www.akc.org/breeds/top50.cfm) will be of special interest to dog-census takers; the Labrador retriever, the top dog, enjoys a more than two-to-one lead over the golden retriever and the German shepherd.

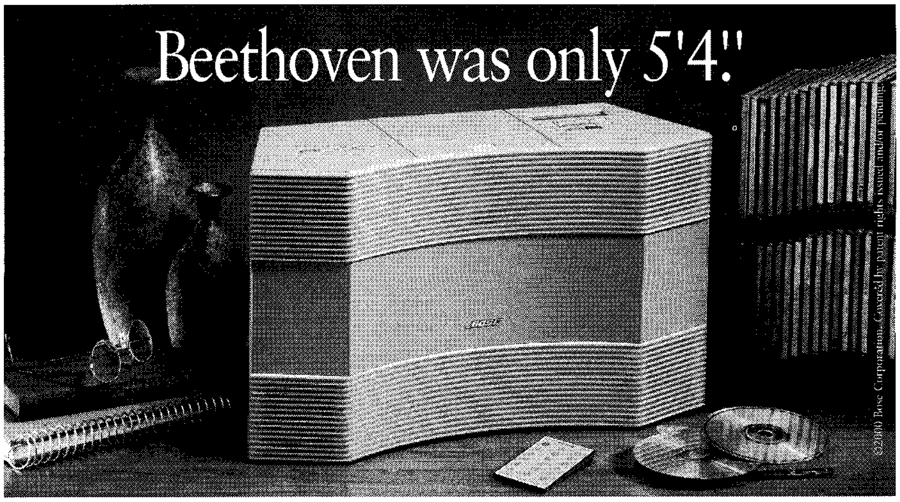
If your dog is neither a retriever nor a shepherd, **Index of Famous Dogs** (www.citizenlunchbox.com/famous/dogs.html) offers proof that canine renown extends across all breeds. With a massive list of noteworthy members of the species in entertainment (Jed Clampett's hound dog, Duke), in literature (Tee Tucker, the corgi from Rita Mae Brown's Mrs. Murphy books), and in real life (Sandy, the bloodhound who tracked down James Earl Ray after his prison break, in 1977), the site will provide hours of fun for you and your dog.

The Poop (www.thepoop.com), a comprehensive resource for New York-area dog owners, looks as though it was designed by a dog: it's cluttered and nearly impossible to navigate. Which is frustrating, because the content—which includes "The Poop Pantry" (recipes for finicky dogs) and a short but useful guide to canine first aid—is excellent. The Poop also operates a birthday registry: submit your dog's birth date, along with brief comments, and the site will post a best-wishes message on the appropriate day. Ages, it should be noted, are measured in people years rather than dog years, so as not to alarm the celebrants.

—*Ben Greenman*

"COMPENDIUM"
Over the course of its first full year in business, Sepia has shown ten artists, whose work appears together here. Each has some tie to Asia, and many specifically to the Indian subcontinent, on which the affiliated Alkazi Collection is focussed. A useful introduction to this new venue. Through July 29. (Sepia Gallery and Alkazi Collection, 148 W. 24th St. 645-9444.)

"INVITATIONAL"
For this three-man show, Alexandros Georgiou offers blurry blowups of pixies frolicking on desks and kitchen sinks, with production values so low you wonder why he bothered. Christopher Kendi poses, curly haired and smiley, waking up, shaving, smearing some green jelly on a piece of bread; the results are pleasantly goofy, and the color is brilliant, but Kendi comes off as a junior Roberto Benigni who has overstayed his welcome. In the back room, Roland Flexner shows endpaper-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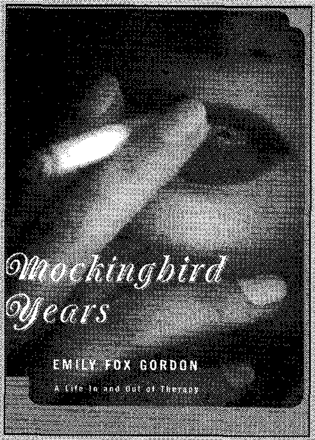

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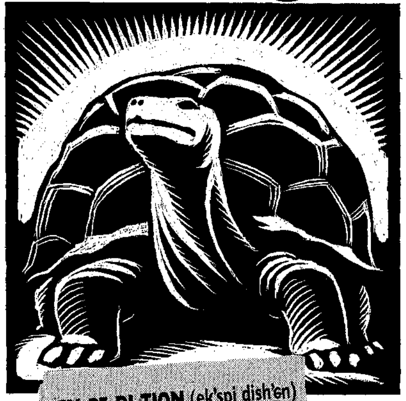

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ready marbleized circles, created by the collapse of ink-tinted soap bubbles. Through July 21. (Curt Marcus, 578 Broadway. 226-3200.)

"UNCONSCIOUS DOCUMENTARIES"
It's a good deed (and often its own reward) to show new photographers in the summer, but parts of this roundup are more group therapy than group show. Lucas Michael photographs himself recollecting moments of joy and anguish but comes across like he's mugging for a screen test. Marianne Courville blows up her father's Super-8 frames until her childhood looks like a moment in the Zapruder film. Steed Taylor crosses himself out of family photos, a gesture that achieves resonance when accompanying literature reveals that he is H.I.V.-positive. Rising above this attention-hungry crowd, Evie McKenna and Danielle Mericle turn in handsome, lonely architectural shots. And Susan Jennings's microscopic photos of cultures from petri dishes left out at gallery openings are good for a laugh—you'll want to wear a surgical mask to the next Mathew Barney opening. Through July 21. (Von Lintel & Nusser, 555 W. 25th St. 242-0599.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (860-1777)—"Testimony" surveys James Nachtwey's career as a documentary photographer from 1981 to the present. Through July 23. ♦ **"A Durable Memento"** presents daguerreotypes of places (Connecticut, Liberia) and people (John Brown) taken by Augustus Washington, the son of a former slave. Through Sept. 24. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

RUDY BURKHARDT
Grey, 100 Washington Square E.
998-6780. Through July 15.

RUDY BURKHARDT / REMEMBERING RUDY
De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.
262-5050. Both shows through July 28.

W. EUGENE SMITH
Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St.
431-0292. Through Aug. 12.

BENJAMIN SWETT
American Space, 1305 Madison Ave.,
at 92nd St. 426-2879. Through July 22.

"ARCHITECTURAL CONSTRUCTS IN CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY"
Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747.
Through Aug. 18.

"SNAPSHOTS"
Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444. Through July 21.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

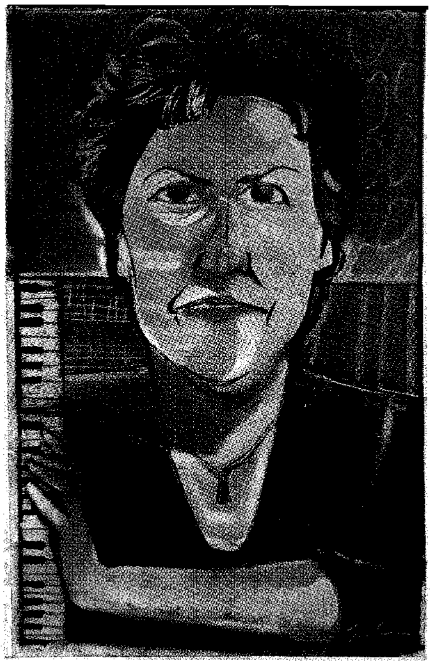
OPERA

OPERA NOVA
This inventive company delights in putting an unorthodox slant on its productions of classic operas, and sometimes the bizarre concoctions prove thoroughly ingratiating. Its latest project, titled "ERACLEA/VioletGW," uses selections from Alessandro Scarlatti's obscure turn-of-the-eighteenth-century opera "Eraclea" as the backbone for a new libretto, by Robert Turner, about the early-twentieth-century harpsichordist Violet Woodhouse, her husband (whom she married on the condition that the relationship never be consummated), the three other men who made up what became her ménage à cinq, and her husband's two sisters, both of whom were murdered by the family's butler. A true story, but the stuff of opera, indeed: if only Scarlatti had known! (Producers' Club 2 Theatre, 616 Ninth Ave., at 44th St. July 12-14 at 7:30, July 15 at 2 and 7:30, and July 16 at 3. For information about tickets, call 724-8204.)

DE NEDERLANDSE OPERA
Lincoln Center Festival 2000 concludes the first United States run of the opera "Writing to Vermeer," with music by Louis Andriessen and a libretto by the film director Peter Greenaway. Reinbert de Leeuw conducts the Asko Ensemble and the Schönberg Ensemble, in addition to singers from the Dutch company. (New York State Theatre. 721-6500. July 13-15 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

"ELECTRONIC EVOLUTION"
Though most people think of electronic instruments as a fairly recent innovation, their history stretches back to the decade following the First World War, when composers such as Varèse and Hindemith began incorporating electrically generated sounds into their music. Electronic innovations and the classical establishment coexisted more or less peacefully until the nineteen-sixties, when rapid advances in technology touched off a panic that performers would be replaced entirely by machines, rendering centuries of musical tradition irrelevant. These days, weapons have been laid down and an armistice drawn up in the form of "electro-acoustic" music, a patent acknowledgement that electronic sounds can expand a composer's expressive options without obliterating traditional means of music making. This week, Lincoln Center Festival 2000 embarks on a five-concert survey of electronic and electro-acoustic music from the past eight decades. July 12 at 8: Reinbert de Leeuw leads two Dutch groups, the Asko Ensemble and the Schönberg Ensemble, in works that mix acoustic and electronic elements: Varèse's "Déserts" (a 1954 piece with tape-recorded sound), Ron Ford's "Salome Fast," and Messiaen's "Trois Petites Liturgies de la Présence Divine." The last includes among the performers the women of the Vox Vocal Ensemble, the pianist Peter Serkin, and Valérie Hartmann-Claverie, a leading exponent of the ondes Martenot (an electronic instrument much used by French composers since it was introduced, by inventor Maurice Martenot, in 1928). (Alice Tully Hall.) ♦ July 13 at 8: The Whitman String Quartet and other chamber musicians gather to perform a concert comprising Messiaen's "Le Merle Noir" (featuring Ms. Hartmann-Claverie on the ondes Martenot); the première of Scott Johnson's "Worth



Pianist Dubravka Tomsic performs in recital at Tanglewood.

RON LEACH

Having" (with electronically sampled voices); Martinů's 1944 "Fantasia," for theremin, piano, and strings (spotlighting thereminist Lydia Kavina); Crumb's "Black Angels (Thirteen Images from the Dark Land)," for amplified string quartet, and Terry Riley's "In C" (the ne plus ultra of minimalism, here performed by a large ensemble of electronic practitioners). (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St.) ♦ July 14 at 9: Varèse's "Poème Électronique," Stockhausen's "Der Gesang der Jünglinge," Xenakis's "Bohor," Paul Lansky's "Night Traffic," and all-electronic pieces by Denis Smalley and J. B. Barriere. (Low Library Rotunda, Columbia University, enter at Broadway at 116th St.) ♦ July 15 at 9: Works using turntables as musical instruments, by Cage, Raz Mesinai, and the ensembles the Kolabz and the X-ecutioners. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St.) (For information about tickets to all Lincoln Center Festival 2000 concerts, call 721-6500. The "Electronic Evolutions" series continues through July 19.) ♦ **Note:** On July 14 at 5:30, in the Kaplan Penthouse (on the tenth floor of Lincoln Center's Rose Building), the festival hosts a free, hour-long show-and-tell session focussing on electronic instruments.

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Lincoln Center Festival 2000 is celebrating the late Olivier Messiaen by presenting several of his large-scale instrumental works. In this concert, members of the Chamber Music Society rope in a good many colleagues, including pianist Peter Serkin and conductor Reinbert de Leeuw, for a rare performance of "Des Canyons aux Étoiles" ("From the Canyons to the Stars"), composed in the early nineteen-seventies as a musical response to the majestic beauty of Bryce and Zion National Parks in Utah. Despite its monumental scale and its large performing forces, the piece has a legitimate claim to being classified as chamber music, since each of its forty-four performers plays a discrete line of music. It knocked the audience's socks off when the Chamber Music Society played it a season ago in Alice Tully Hall. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. July 18 at 8.)

RECITALS

OSIRIS TRIO
This Dutch piano trio, founded in 1988, has attracted notice in this country through its compelling recordings (on the Channel Classics label) of works by Beethoven, Dvořák, and Ives—the last of which remains adventurous repertoire for European ensembles. Carnegie Hall brought the group to town in 1997 for its first New York performance, as a part of its "Distinctive Débuts" series (for which it was nominated by the prestigious Concertgebouw in Amsterdam). Now they return to play trios by Haydn (in G Major, Hob. XV:25), Frank Martin (his enjoyable trio "Sur des Mélodies Populaires Irlandaises," apparently enjoying a resurgence in this era of "Riverdance"), and Dvořák (the inevitable "Dumky"), as well as "Ackermusik," by the contemporary Dutch composer Theo Loevendie. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. July 12 at 5:45.)

JACQUES THIBAUD STRING TRIO
Trinity Church's "Make Mine Mozart" series continues as this young ensemble on the rise offers two of the composer's Adagios and Fugues (K. 404a) and his supernal Divertimento in E-Flat Major (K. 563). (Broadway at Wall St. July 13 at 1. No tickets necessary.)

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A BAT?
Now there's an interesting name for a chamber group, one that—you will correctly surmise—does not concern itself with Haydn trios or Hummel quintets. Vocalists Kitty Brazelton and Dafna Naphtali, percussionist Danny Tunick, and sound sculptor Paul Geluso present two communally composed electro-acoustic pieces richly influenced by punk rock and cutting-edge computer sonics. Long titles seem to appeal to these musicians: the concert opens with "she said—she said, 'Can you sing 'Sermonette' with me?' " and concludes with "answer: '5 dreams—The Marriage of Heaven and Hell'—really?" Really. (Garden of the Cooper-Hewitt National

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Design Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St. July 18 at 6:30. No tickets necessary. Bring a blanket to sit on.)

WORKS BY MEREDITH MONK
She sings, she dances, she interacts with film; she gurgles, gasps, and groans; whispers, whines, and whistles; masticates and ululates. The first evening of Lincoln Center Festival 2000's three-evening Monk retrospective includes her performances of "Songs from the Hill" (from 1976) and "Music for Voice and Piano" (a collection created between 1972 and 1993, and here involving pianist Nurit Tilles). (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. July 18 at 8. For information about tickets, call 721-6500. The retrospective continues through July 23.)

OUT OF TOWN

A selective listing of festival events within a reasonable drive from New York City.

NEWPORT MUSIC FESTIVAL
This summer, Newport's Gilded Age "cottages" are resounding with a rich assortment of works by Saint-Saëns, whose enormous catalogue—which vastly exceeds such familiar items as "Danse Macabre," "Carnival of the Animals," and a handful of concertos—is long overdue for an exhaustive traversal. The following rank among the week's highlights. July 12 and July 17 at 4 and July 14-15 at 2 and 5: Each concert features a different program of Saint-Saëns's vocal and chamber works. (Ochre Court.) ♦ July 15 at 9: Music from the eighteenth-century Esterházy Court, by Haydn and seven of his colleagues, performed by tenor John Aler, pianist Pedja Muzijevic, and nine other musicians. (The Breakers.) ♦ July 16-17 at 7: Two all-Chopin programs performed by pianist Agustín Anievas. (Marble House.) (Newport, R.I. 401-849-0700. The festival continues through July 23.)

TANGLEWOOD
July 12 at 8:30: Keith Lockhart leads the Boston Pops Orchestra. ♦ July 13 at 8:30: The Slovenian pianist Dubravka Tomsic began her career with great promise, performing her Town Hall début in 1954, at the age of thirteen, and appearing with the New York Philharmonic the following year to considerable acclaim. For whatever reasons, she did not go on to secure a place on American stages, concentrating her work in Europe instead. In 1989 she made a splash by opening that year's Newport Music Festival, which makes a specialty of rediscovering overlooked pianists. Buoyed by rapturous accolades from the Boston press, she has become a favorite with Massachusetts music lovers who admire her technical clarity, mercurial agility, and emotional vivaciousness. Here she performs sonatas by Liszt and Prokofiev (his Fourth), among other works. ♦ July 14 at 8:30: James DePreist conducts the Boston Symphony in Fauré's "Pelléas et Mélisande" Suite, Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2 (with Horacio Gutierrez), and Beethoven's Symphony No. 7. ♦ July 15 at 8:30: In a concert by the Boston Symphony, Mr. DePreist conducts Elgar's "Enigma" Variations; Seiji Ozawa directs Bernstein's "Opening Prayer" and Act Three of Verdi's "Falstaff," with the cast in the latter including sopranos Christine Goerke and Heidi Grant Murphy and (in the title role) baritone John Del Carlo. ♦ July 16 at 2:30: Brahms's "Tragic Overture," Lutoslawski's Concerto for Orchestra, and Beethoven's Violin Concerto, with Mr. Ozawa conducting the Boston Symphony and Itzhak Perlman as the soloist. ♦ July 18 at 8:30: Soprano Barbara Bonney and several instrumentalists offer music by Copland, Previn, and Argento. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

CARAMOOR
July 14 at 8: The ensemble eighth blackbird, which incorporates an infectious theatricality into its performances of modern music, offers works by (among other contemporary composers) Donald Martino and George Crumb (his much loved "Vox Balaenae," for flute, cello, and piano, in which the masked musicians introduce imitation whale sounds into the instrumental texture). ♦ July 15 at 8:30: Donald Runnicles leads the Orchestra of St. Luke's in Stravinsky's "Dumbarton Oaks" Concerto (conceived as a rollicking twentieth-century equivalent to a Bach "Brandenburg" Concerto), Schumann's Piano Concerto (featuring Hélène Grimaud, widely hailed for her interpretation of Germanic masterworks), and Beethoven's Symphony No. 3. ♦ July 16 at 4: Ms. Grimaud, the Shanghai String Quartet, and other chamber-music colleagues offer works by the most notable mutual-admiration musical dyad of the nineteenth century, Schumann and Brahms. The program comprises the former's "Phantasiestücke" (with clarinettist Igor Begelman) and his Piano Quintet, as well as the latter's B-Major Piano Trio and his Horn Trio (with French hornist David Jolley). (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA
Two new productions are currently running in repertory. July 15 at 8: "La Bohème," with soprano Kelley Nassief as Mimi; conducted by Stewart Robertson. ♦ July 16 at 2: "The Glass Blowers, or The American Maid," a rarely staged operetta composed in 1913 by John Philip Sousa; conducted by John DeMain. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
July 15 at 8: Jazz singer Cynthia McCorkindale. ♦ July 16 at 3: The St. Petersburg String Quartet plays Ravel's String Quartet in a program that is otherwise given over to rarities: two of Glazunov's "Five Novelettes" and (with pianist Volodymyr Vynnytsky assisting) the Piano Quintet No. 1 by Ernest Bloch (a 1923 composition in which its generally conservative composer experimented with the use of quarter tones). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS
July 15 at 8: eighth blackbird reprises its program of music by Crumb, Martino, and others (see Caramoor). ♦ July 16 at 3: Over the past decade, the American String Quartet became heavily enmeshed in the music of Mozart, a project that led to their recording all twenty-three of his quartets for a six-CD set, released in 1998 (on the now-defunct MusicMasters label; it can still be acquired through the mail-order Musical Heritage Society). For those performances, the group used a matched set of Stradivari instruments that reside in the Smithsonian Institution. Though the Stradivaris don't go on the road, the group's Mozart interpretations do. In this concert, the foursome plays his Adagio and Fugue (K. 546), as well as his String Quintets in C Minor and C Major (with violist Setsuko Nagata completing the ranks for both). Also on the program are three preludes and fugues from Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavier," arranged by the American Quartet's violist, Daniel Avshalomov. (Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-8217.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

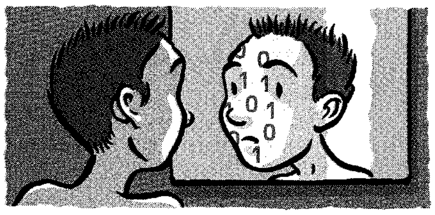
READINGS
July 16 at 7:30: By Laura Shaine Cunningham, from her memoir, "A Place in the Country," and by Julia Slavin, from "The Woman Who Cut Off Her Leg at the Maidstone Club and Other Stories." (Temple Bar, 332 Lafayette St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ July 17 at 7:30: By Elizabeth Nunez, from her novel "Bruised Hibiscus." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
July 13 at 7: Architect Robert A. M. Stern discusses classicism in New York City. (Sotheby's Institute of Art, York Ave. at 72nd St. For more information, call 894-1111.) ♦ July 14, from 5:30 to 8: As a part of the Lincoln Center Festival, David Kean, the founder of the Audities Foundation, a Los Angeles-based repository of electronic instruments, moderates a talk and demonstration about the objects of his passion, with Robert Moog, inventor of the synthesizer that bears his name, Lydia Kavina, a noted thereminist, Dave Amels, who'll play the clavivox, and others. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, 165 W. 65th St. For more information, call 875-5928.)

WALKS
July 12 at 6: Geologist Sidney Horenstein leads a tour through Prospect Park. (For more information, call 718-788-8500, ext. 401.) ♦ July 15-16 at 12:30: Environmentalist Debbie Becker points out the egrets in the New York Botanical Garden. (For more information, call 718-817-8700.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Growing Up Cyber



As the Internet enters its own adolescence, authors have begun to investigate how this growing technology affects the lives of adolescents worldwide. In the just-published **GEEKS** (Villard), Jon Katz, formerly a writer for Wired, reflects on the recent ascendancy of those nerdy, tech-obsessed kids who spend every waking hour playing Quake and downloading free software—and who may even grow up to face federal antitrust actions of their own someday. "The kid who might once have cruised through town showing off his new Mustang is more apt to invite friends over to see his turbocharged new hard drive," Katz writes, as he traces the coming-of-age of two geek heroes named Jesse and Eric, whose flair for programming and Web surfing opens a previously inaccessible escape route out of their stifling Idaho home town.

For Katie Tarbox, the Net was not a tool of liberation. In **KATIE.COM** (Dutton), Tarbox, a seventeen-year-old Connecticut girl, tells how she was drawn into an on-line relationship with Vallleyguy, a sweet-sounding chat-room denizen who turned out to be a middle-aged stalker. In **SUNNYVALE** (Villard), journalist Jeff Goodell offers a sobering memoir of his family's life and hard times in Silicon Valley, where, in the late seventies, his mother worked for a small, geek-friendly company called Apple.

There's little evidence of such ambivalence in twenty-one-year-old Natacha Merritt's **DIGITAL DIARIES** (Taschen), a sleek collection of digital photographs, some of which first appeared on the Web. In these frank images of erotic rites of passage, the on-line culture of voyeurism unites art, technology, and libido, and allows Merritt to coin some spicy afterglow metaphors, including one that could become a motto for the entire geek generation: "I'm running on a new operating system."

—*Mark Rozzo*

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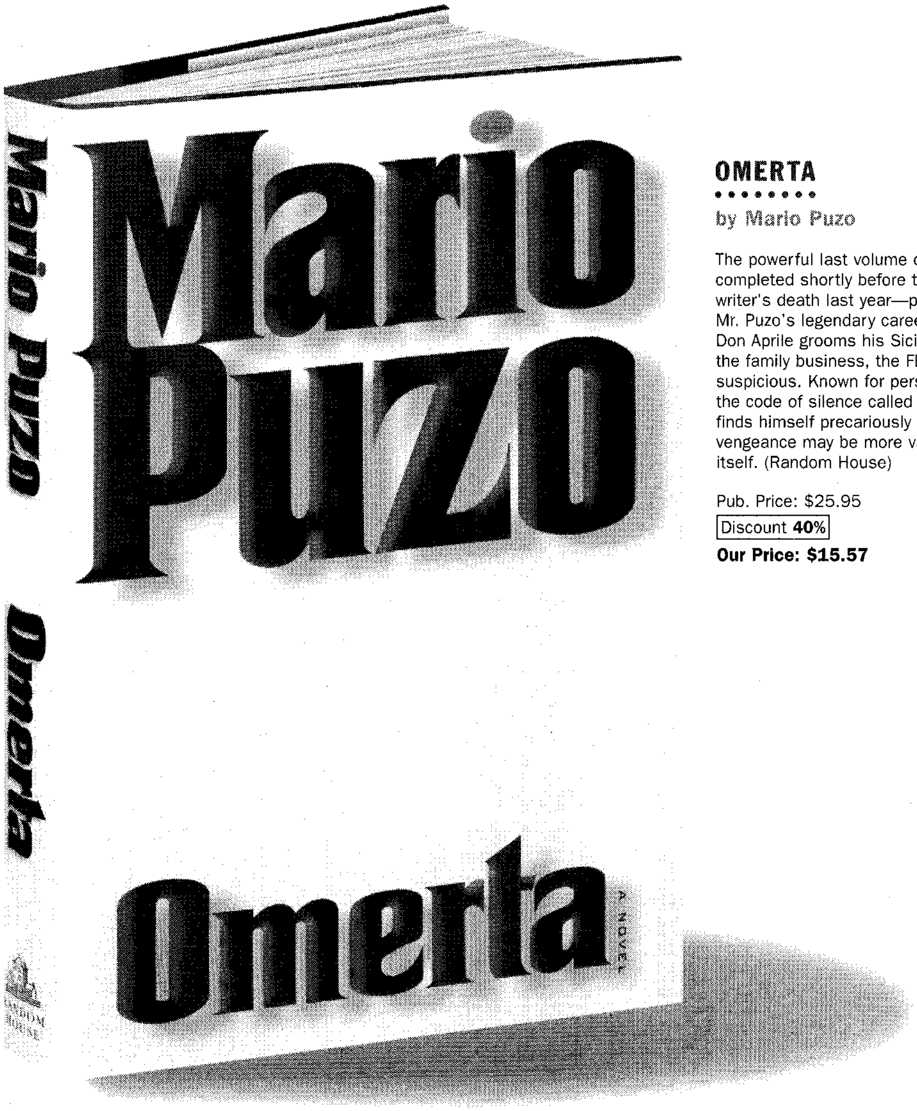

OMERTA

by Mario Puzo

The powerful last volume of the Mafia saga—completed shortly before the Academy Award®-winning writer's death last year—proves a memorable finale to Mr. Puzo's legendary career. As ruthless crime boss Don Aprile grooms his Sicilian nephew to take over the family business, the FBI becomes dangerously suspicious. Known for persuading insiders to violate the code of silence called *omertá*, special agent Cilke finds himself precariously drawn into a war where vengeance may be more valuable than the family itself. (Random House)

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MOVIES OPENING

THE BIG BLUE
A director's cut of Luc Besson's 1988 film about two competitive deep-sea divers (Jean-Marc Barr and Jean Reno), which features a new ending. In French. Opening July 14.

CHUCK & BUCK
A comedy about an infantile young man (Mike White) who becomes fixated on winning back the affections of his childhood best friend. With Chris and Paul Weitz. Directed by Miguel Arteta. Opening July 14.

FEAR OF FICTION
A novelist from New York and a young stranger embark on a cross-country trip. Directed by Charlie Ahearn. Opening July 13.

THE FIVE SENSES
Jeremy Podeswa wrote and directed this drama about five different characters whose lives are changed by the loss or enhancement of their senses. Opening July 14.

IT'S THE RAGE
An ensemble film about gun control, in which all of the stories are linked by violent events. With Joan Allen, David Schwimmer, Gary Sinise, Anna Paquin, and Giovanni Ribisi. Directed by Jim Stern. Opening July 14.

THE NIGHT LARRY KRAMER KISSED ME
A screen version of David Drake's popular play about his life as an urban gay man. Opening July 14. (The Screening Room.)

SHADOW HOURS
A Los Angeles gas-station attendant gets drawn into the city's S & M subculture. Directed by Isaac H. Eaton. Opening July 14.

TWO WOMEN
A drama that follows the lives of two architecture students in the first years of Iran's Islamic republic. Directed by Tahmine Milani. In Farsi. Opening July 14.

THE WISDOM OF CROCODILES
Jude Law plays an incurable womanizer whose girlfriends consistently meet tragic ends; his latest quarry (Elina Löwensohn) might just escape. Directed by Po-Chih Leong. Opening July 14.

X-MEN
Professor Xavier (Patrick Stewart) and his student mutants must do battle with a group of evil mutants led by Magneto (Ian McKellen), in this adaptation of the Marvel Comics series. Directed by Bryan Singer. Opening July 14.

FILM NOTES

If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.

THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

CHICKEN RUN
A full-length exercise in stop-motion animation, but don't be scared. Technically, this involves the microscopic manipulation of malleable figures, and the finished product comes across as a rebuke to Disney's recent cartoon blockbusters, where even the sharpest characters move in two dimensions and think in one. Nick Park is the guy who improved the world with the introduction of the master-and-dog comedy duo Wallace and Gromit; now, in fellowship with Peter Lord, he has turned to chickens, most of whom maintain a Wallace-like width of grinning mouth. Our heroes are hens, living claw-to-beak on a repressive farm, whose owner—think camp commandant—plans to switch from egg production to chicken potpies. Enter a roaming rooster named Rocky, pumped with American cheer and graced with the voice of Mel Gibson. He will lead the ladies over the wire to pastures new, a trip familiar to anyone who grew up on Second World War escape flicks. The result is bright and inventive, though it lacks the snap of earlier Park productions. In a summer strewn with films about courage, though, this one is high in the pecking order.—*Anthony Lane* (7/10/00) (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

CROUPIER
A slight and streamlined bauble from British director Mike Hodges, about a writer (Clive Owen) who takes a job as a roulette dealer, aiming, in the process, to write a best-seller about his experiences. The lean and twisted screenplay—nobody is what he seems—gives Hodges ample time to play with doppelgängers, duplicity, and lots of mirrors, and the sombre turns of the story and low-key performances are a welcome reminder that taut moviemaking can be as exciting as fast-paced editing and scorching pyrotechnics.—*Bruce Diones* (BAM Rose Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and The Screening Room.)

THE DECALOGUE
In 1988 and 1989, the Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski made a series of ten films for Polish television, in which each movie, roughly an hour in length, was devoted to one of the Ten Commandments. The films, set largely around an apartment complex in Warsaw, are not so much literal illustrations of the commandments as fables inspired by them—very modern fables, it turns out, featuring relations between men and women, and parents and children, of a depth and intensity not seen since Ingmar Bergman stopped making movies in the early eighties.—*David Denby* (6/12/00) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

DISNEY'S THE KID
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Village East Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE FILTH AND THE FURY
A new documentary about the Sex Pistols by Julien Temple, who has already made "The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle." Whether or not the band is an inexhaustible topic remains open to debate. The sight of a sullen and raw-skinned Sid Vicious sitting on a park bench and explaining how good-looking he is will not, perhaps, bear repeated viewings. The film wants Britain to be as reckless and unpredictable as its subject, but this requires a little twisting of the evidence: Britain in the mid-nineteen-seventies was bored and bungling, and, despite what Temple's riotous montage of unrest might suggest, the place was never on the verge of revolution. The climax of the picture is all anticlimax. Uprooted from home territory, the Sex Pistols withered in the alien soil of America. Their antics have aged badly; how odd, then, that their fistful of hits sound more essential and purgative than ever.—*A.L.* (4/3/00) (Art Greenwich Twin and Pioneer.)

THE GANG'S ALL HERE
Those who consider Busby Berkeley a master have anointed this 1943 film his masterpiece. Chorus girls dissolve into artichokes; there's a banana xylophone; and, for the song "The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat," Carmen Miranda appears in platform wedgies on an avenue of giant strawberries. Alice Faye sings the torch song "No Love, No Nothing," and also introduces the "Polka-Dot Polka" ballet, which, as a piece of staging, defies description.—*Pauline Kael* (Bryant Park; July 17.)

GLADIATOR
Ridley Scott's new picture is strong and stirring, almost to a fault. Russell Crowe plays Maximus, a Roman general so victorious in battle and so popular with his troops that the incoming emperor, Commodus (Joaquin Phoenix), decides within minutes to have him killed. Maximus escapes but winds up in slavery, under the rheumy eye of Proximo (Oliver Reed). Whenever the movie strays into complexity, it founders and slows. What you want is the games, and Scott delivers them avidly, complete with unfed tigers.—*A.L.* (5/8/00) (Art Greenwich Twin, East 85th Street, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Union Square.)

GROOVE
A cheerful high arrives early in Greg Harrison's ode to rave culture: a girl in a laundromat, listening to techno on her Discman, grooves to the sight of tumbling clothes in a dryer. The scene lasts only a few seconds, but it sets a playful vibe for Harrison's amiable clubland picture. The cast is fresh and appealingly amateurish, but what makes the film so much fun is Harrison's low-key directorial style—there's no flashy MTV editing timed to the music, just some shaggy, psychedelic club lighting and perfect rave details (the bottled water, backpacks, lollipops, and stuffed animals) that give the picture its love-in zest. The film features British d.j. John Digweed's ecstatic electronica, a blast of such sheer happiness that movie audiences should bring their own glow sticks to wave joyously in the air.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center and BAM Rose Cinemas.)

HAMLET
In this modern-dress version, the black towers of Times Square make a sinister and eloquent setting for the power struggles within the Denmark Corporation. The bedraggled Hamlet (Ethan Hawke), a slacker in a knit cap, recites "To be or not to be" in a video store and washes Polonius's blood-soaked clothes in a laundromat. Michael Almereyda, a young veteran of the New York independent scene, has developed his own form of visual poetry among the corporate settings and video screens, and many of the translations of Shakespeare into contemporaneity are both witty and oddly right.—*D.D.* (5/15/00) (Village East Cinemas.)

HUMANITÉ
An odd, slow, disturbing near-masterpiece set in Bailleul, in the north of France, where a sad-sack policeman named Pharaon (Emmanuel Schotté) investigates a sordid crime—the rape and murder of an eleven-year-old girl. The dim but empathic Pharaon lives with his mother and longs for Domino (Séverine Caneele), the big-boned factory worker and commonplace sex goddess who lives down the street. In form, the movie is a detective story, but we watch with increasing apprehensiveness as it dawns on us that Pharaon might be a kind of sluggish Oedipus, a sleuth who uncovers the traces of a crime that he has committed himself. The director, Bruno Dumont, works in Cinemascope, and the enormous, sharply focussed images breathe air and light and a richly suggestive stillness.—*D.D.* (6/12/00) (Film Forum.)

JESUS' SON
The new Alison Maclean film, adapted from the short stories of Denis Johnson, is her first offering since "Crush," and it maintains her careful interest in careless lives. Billy Crudup, who gets more interesting with every movie, plays a chronic drifter. He falls in love, roughly speaking, with a junkie (Samantha Morton); some of their scenes together are hard to watch, but Maclean's direction is more tender than indulgent, and the movie grips hardest when times are most raw. As the mood lifts and lightens in the second half, the blaze of the film dies down. Still, not since Robert Altman turned his attention to Raymond Carver has a director seemed so determined to master the ramshackle.—*A.L.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Union Square.)

JOHNNY GUITAR
Nicholas Ray's baroque, haywire "adult" Western is good for a laugh. Erotic tension and angst, circa 1954, invade the Arizona landscapes and Joan Craw-

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ford stars as Vienna, the owner of a frontier casino bar. Throughout, the sexual symbolism is hilarious. Crawford's props and costumes (including holster and neckband) are straight out of Krafft-Ebing, with colors by Walt Disney.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; July 14 and July 16).

KISS ME KATE

For the uninitiated, 3-D movies seem like a curious relic of the fifties, in a league with sock hops, the Soviet Union, and hula-hoop endurance contests. Once you do see a stellar 3-D movie like "Kiss Me Kate" projected in its original format, it's hard to understand why the technology has died away. Although it's not the most eye-popping example of the genre, this 1953 musical, adapted by George Sidney from Cole Porter's Broadway smash, provides plenty of stereoscopic tricks, beginning with Ann Miller's free-wheeling performance of "Too Darn Hot," which sends a whole flotilla of red handkerchiefs flying toward the audience.—*Michael Agger* (Film Forum.)

LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD

The characters in this 1961 Alain Resnais movie are a tony variant of the undead of vampire movies. This high-fashion puzzle, written by Alain Robbe-Grillet, takes place in what is described to us as an "enormous, luxurious, baroque, lugubrious hotel—where corridors succeed endless corridors." The mood is set by climaxes of organ music and this distended narration; it's all solemn and expectant—like High Mass. The settings and costumes seem to be waiting for a high-romantic theme or fantasy; the people, pawns who are manipulated into shifting positions, seem to be placed for wit, or for irony. But all we get are pretty pictures. Robbe-Grillet says that the film is a pure construction, an object without reference to anything outside itself, and that the existence of the two characters begins when the film begins and ends ninety-three minutes later. It has a hypnotic effect on some people; others may be tempted to end it sooner. In French.—*P.K.* (Walter Reade Theatre; July 14-15.)

ME, MYSELF & IRENE

In the latest gross-out comedy by the Farrelly brothers, Jim Carrey, a mild-mannered Rhode Island state trooper, represses so many hostile impulses that his personality splits in two—a new man pops out of him, a guy with a low bedroom voice and cool panther moves. Switching back and forth between the two characters, Carrey performs miracles with his face, teeth, groin, ass, and elbows, but the switches are so frequent and arbitrary that Renée Zellweger, his charming co-star, doesn't have the time or space to work up a coherent response to either man. The movie fails as romantic comedy and as narrative; it starts and stops, and after a while you forget why anyone is doing anything.—*D.D.* (7/3/00) (Chelsea West, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia I and II, 62nd & Broadway, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

M:I-2

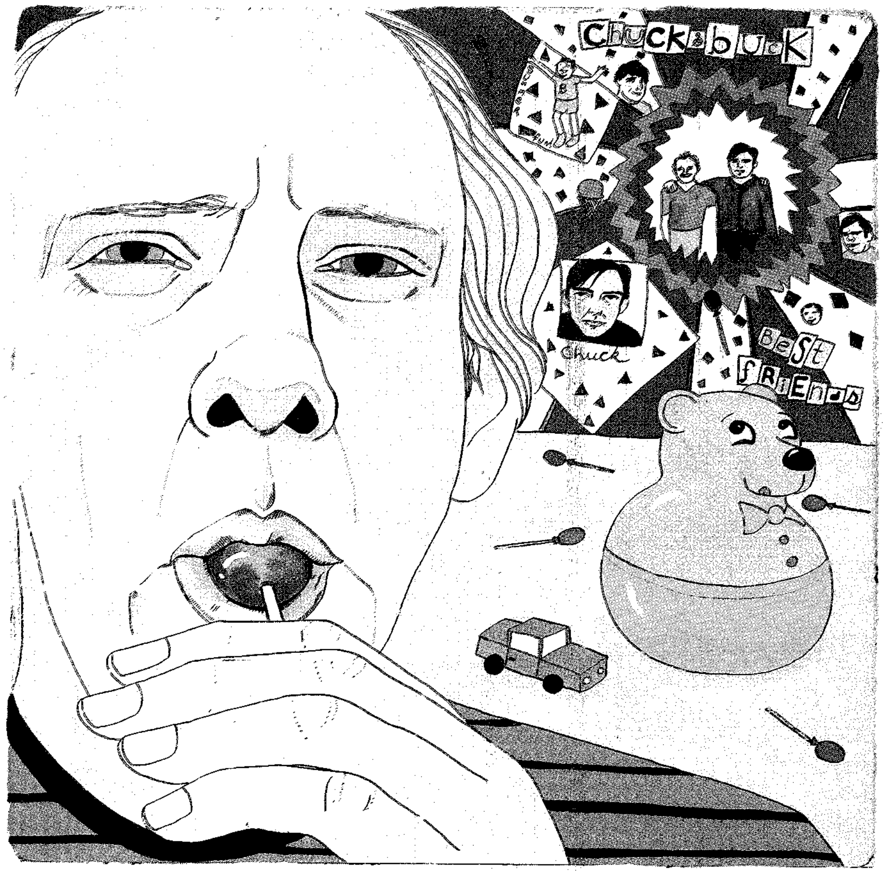
It should have been a treat. The director is John Woo, the man who took the gravity out of gunfights. The screenwriter is Robert Towne, who wrote half the movies that made Jack Nicholson a star, and the leading lady is Thandie Newton, whose face could make a thousand ships do pretty much anything she wants. But this much vaunted sequel to "Mission: Impossible," which features Tom Cruise and his indestructible physique, goes through the motions of the multinational action thriller, and the result is more gruelling than pleasurable.—*A.L.* (6/5/00) (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE PATRIOT

A square but stirring and often absorbing epic about the Revolutionary War. Benjamin Martin (Mel Gibson), a South Carolinian who's a war lover hiding as a man of peace, goes into action when the British execute one of his sons. Martin refuses to play by the standard rules of warfare, in which opposing armies walk toward each other across open ground and then proceed to shoot at point-blank range; he organizes a guerrilla force that attacks out of the swamps. In response, the British commander, General Cornwallis (Tom Wilkinson), unleashes a sadistic subordinate, Colonel William Tavington (Jason Isaacs), who makes war against the American civilian population. At this point, the movie seems to jump right over the nineteenth century into the twentieth. We get ambushes, swordplay, skirmishes, battles, and family scenes, all generally well staged, with gravity and power, by the director Roland Emmerich. Written by Robert Rodat.—*D.D.* (7/3/00) (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, Union Square, and Waverly 1 and 2).

PEEPING TOM

For connoisseurs of repellent cinema, there's never been a psycho thriller as skin-crawling as Michael Powell's 1960 portrait of a would-be director as a serial killer. Carl Boehm is the title creep, a focus-puller at a London movie studio who moonlights as a pornographic-still photographer and spends his spare time shooting a documentary about murder, starring his victims. In some sense, Boehm is a victim himself, the son of a celebrated biologist (played by Powell) obsessed with charting every stage of human development, especially "fear and the nervous system." His unorthodox techniques, which involve using a 16-mm. camera to document his son's growth—and scaring the boy awake with a lizard so he can study the boy's hysterical reaction—leave permanent scars. As an adult, Boehm still views the camera as an instrument of terror: he turns the third leg of his tripod into a bayonet, filming his female targets as they die in a state of excruciating fear. The film isn't black comedy, it's an obsessive-compulsive nightmare.—*M.S.* (American Museum of the Moving Image; July 15-16.)



Opening July 14, Mike White as an incompletely launched adult in "Chuck & Buck."

LARA TOMLIN

THE PERFECT STORM

Man against the elements. Man is represented by George Clooney, which seems pretty flattering to the rest of us; he plays Billy Tyne, the captain of a fishing boat that set out from Gloucester, Massachusetts, in the fall of 1991. The elements are represented by a tempest of Shakespearean ferocity, although the Prospero in question was Industrial Light and Magic. What we see are humans being dwarfed by digital waves: a parable for our time. The story, based on Sebastian Junger's book, is true to life, give or take a few nautical miles and a bunch of dead dialogue, most of which goes to the women—headed by a weepy Diane Lane—left behind onshore. The screenwriter, Bill Wittliff, bends over backward to enliven the crew's relationships, but he basically falls overboard, and he's not helped by the need to tack back and forth from the starring vessel to a couple of bit boats, plus a passing helicopter. The director is Wolfgang Petersen, who got soaked in the line of duty as long ago as "Das Boot." For all the swell and spray, he has to less to cling on to here. Junger's book, which was crammed with great stuff about gales and gutting, was perhaps not as adaptable as Hollywood liked to think.—*A.L.* (7/10/00) (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII).

PURPLE NOON

Maurice Ronet and Alain Delon as decadent Americans loafing in Italy—Ronet rich and vicious, Delon poor, amoral, and murderous. When Delon tries on Ronet's clothes, it's clear that they look better on him. The director, René Clément, keeps this 1960 thriller in the sun-drenched-holiday style of travel posters, with homosexual hatred and envy festering. All it has going for it is this sensuous, kicky atmosphere; you feel as if you're breathing something beautiful and rotten. Adapted from Patricia Highsmith's "The Talented Mr. Ripley." In French.—*P.K.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; July 13-14.)

SHAFT

His head shaved, his goatee minimalized (etched almost), and his body sheathed in black-on-black Armani, Samuel L. Jackson is a shaft all right, a walking blade of style. Until the movie collapses into an endless shoot-out, in which everyone in the tristate area allows himself to be blown away by the hero, this sequel to the 1971 film is mostly disreputable fun. Featuring an amazingly inventive performance by Jeffrey Wright as a Dominican drug dealer. Directed by John Singleton; written by Richard Price, Singleton, and Shane Salerno.—*D.D.* (7/3/00) (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

SHOWER
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

SMALL TIME CROOKS
A small-time comedy from Woody Allen, who plays a useless thief who, through no talent of his own, stumbles into money; the overriding purpose of this twist is that we get to see him wearing bilious green shirts, eye-scarring indigo jackets, and sub-Versace belts studded with gold rivets. Alongside Allen are Tracey Ullman, as his loud and triumphal wife, Hugh Grant, as the smoothie who is paid to educate her, Jon Lovitz, in a delightful but underused supporting role, and Elaine May, who slips the movie into her handbag and walks away with it.—*A.L.* (5/22/00) (Beekman, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas.)

SUNSHINE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, 72nd Street East, and Union Square.)

TIME REGAINED
Only a fool, you suppose, would attempt to film Proust; in that case, Raoul Ruiz, the Chilean director, is a wise and delicate fool, especially since he elected to concentrate on the concluding volume of "In Search of Lost Time." There's no Swann, and not much of Proust's beloved Albertine (Chiara Mastroianni), but plenty of Odette (Catherine Deneuve), the Baron de Charlus (John Malkovich), and the haughty Saint-Loup (Pascal Greggory), plus enough of Gilberte (Emmanuelle Béart) to demonstrate why men and boys alike would throw their hearts, or their teacups, at her feet. The picture has a stately, waltz-like rhythm, as the narrator (Marcello Mazzarella, a dead ringer for the real Proust) guides us through the declining fortunes of his friends under the shadow of the First World War. There are the inescapable glances back into Proust's childhood, but the movie feels more companionable than cloistered. At times, both people and props start to shift and sway, as though on the deck of a ship; if you come out of the movie suffering from a mixture of nausea and nostalgia, then Ruiz can pride himself on a job well done. In French.—*A.L.* (6/19 & 6/26/00) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE VIRGIN SUICIDES
Sofia Coppola's directorial début is a seventies period piece about five blond suicidal sisters (the Lisbons) and the young men who love them. It's hard to brighten suicide, and even harder to make it funny and mysterious at the same time, and this adaptation of Jeffrey Eugenides' novel veers awkwardly between comedy and fable. Coppola concentrates mostly on re-creating the mood of the book: the fantastic intensity of adolescence, when certain girls (and the desperate acts they inspire) can acquire the status of legend.—*M.A.* (Village East Cinemas.)

THE WOMAN CHASER
It's while enduring a bland, Babbitt-esque speech at a local businessmen's luncheon that Richard Hudson—used-car salesman, dreamer, serial seducer—decides he must change his life, or, as he puts it, "tie up in a single package his reasons for existing." Given that he's in Los Angeles in the fifties and lacks any discernible creative talent, he makes the obvious choice: he'll direct a movie. From this point on, the film becomes a wicked and brilliant parody of the megalomaniac impulses that fuel moviemaking. Patrick Warburton, the actor who plays Hudson, has a large, lumberjack-like body, and he strides about dispensing blunt aphorisms concerning women, human nature, and storytelling. The film is replete with stylish noir settings, shot in black-and-white, but the story doubles back on itself, and nothing is ever clearly defined. Robinson Devor (the actual writer and director), in a final irony, pulls off a surprise ending that's also a classic Hollywood cliché.—*M.A.* (The Screening Room.)

ALSO PLAYING

BLOOD SIMPLE
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

BUT I'M A CHEERLEADER
Angelika Film Center and Chelsea Cinemas.

BUTTERFLY
Angelika Film Center and Paris.

EAST-WEST
Lincoln Plaza and Quad Cinema.

GHOST DOG: THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI
Village East Cinemas.

GRASS
Film Forum.

PRAISE
The Screening Room.

SCARY MOVIE
Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Union Square, and Waverly 1 and 2.

TRIXIE
Angelika Film Center and First & 62nd Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Sept. 3: "Behind the Mirror," a series of films that portray the darker side of the fifties. July 15 at 2: "Ace in the Hole" (1951, Billy Wilder). ♦ July 15 at 4:30: "Sweet Smell of Success" (1957, Alexander Mackendrick). ♦ July 16 at 2: "Salt of the Earth" (1953, Herbert Biberman). ♦ July 16 at 4: "Trial" (1955, Mark Robson). ♦ Classic movies. July 15-16: "Peeping Tom" (†).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—July 13 at 7 and 9:30: "130 Films, 1896-1905," a presentation of recently restored films by the Lumière brothers. ♦ July 14 at 7, July 15 at 4:30, and July 16 at 7: "Bringing Out the Dead" (1999, Martin Scorsese). ♦ July 14 at 9:30, July 15 at 7, and July 16 at 4:30: "Mean Streets" (1973, Scorsese). ♦ July 15-16 at 3: "The Holy Scrolls" (1971-99, Bruce Baillie).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—July 12 at 7 and 9:30: "Night of the Demon" (1958, Jacques Tourneur; in French). ♦ July 13-14 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Purple Noon" (†). ♦ July 15 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "A Taste of Cherry" (1997, Abbas Kiarostami; in Farsi). ♦ July 16 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Cold Water" (1994, Olivier Assayas; in French). ♦ July 17 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Vengeance Is Mine" (1979, Shohei Imamura; in Japanese). ♦ July 18 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Eel" (1998, Imamura; in Japanese).

BRYANT PARK
Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. (521-5700)—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing. July 17: "The Gang's All Here" (†).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—July 7-July 20 at 1:30, 4:15, 7, and 9:40: A 3-D version of "Kiss Me Kate" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—July 13 at 6 and July 15 at 2: "The Thief of Bagdad" (1940, Ludwig Berger, Tim Whelan, and Michael Powell). ♦ July 13 at 6: "A Woman of Paris" (1923, Charlie Chaplin). ♦ July 14 at 3: "Letter from an Unknown Woman" (1948, Max Ophüls). ♦ July 14 at 6 and July 16 at 2: "Johnny Guitar" (†). ♦ July 14 at 8: "The Golden Coach" (1953, Jean Renoir; in French). ♦ July 15 at 5: "The Phantom of the Opera" (1943, Arthur Lubin). ♦ July 15 at 5: "It's a Wonderful Life" (1947, Frank Capra). ♦ July 16 at 5: "The Searchers" (1956, John Ford). ♦ July 17 at 3: "Strange Victory" (1948, Leo Hurwitz). ♦ July 17 at 6: "North by Northwest" (1959, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ July 18 at 6: "The River" (1951, Renoir; in French).

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO
25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through Sept. 17: "The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle and Friends," a retrospective of the classic cartoon. Tuesdays through Sundays at 12:15, Thursdays at 6, and Fridays at 7.

THE SCREENING ROOM
54 Varick St. (334-2100)—July 15-16 at 3: "The Saragossa Manuscript" (1965, Wojciech Has; in Polish). ♦ Blaxploitation films. July 14-15 at midnight: "Truck Turner" (1974, Jonathan Kaplan).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through July 20: "Time and Again," a retrospective of films by Alain Resnais. All films are in French. July 12 at 6:15: "No Smoking" (1993). ♦ July 12 at 9: "Mélo" (1986). ♦ July 13 at 9:20: "The War Is Over" (1966). ♦ July 14 at 5 and 9 and July 15 at 3:15 and 7:15: "Hiroshima Mon Amour" (1959). ♦ July 14 at 3 and 7 and July 15 at 1:15, 5:15, and 9:15: "Last Year at Marienbad" (†). ♦ July 16 at 1:10 and 5:50: "Providence" (1977). ♦ July 16 at 3:30 and 8:10: "Muriel" (1963). ♦ July 17 at 8:30: "Stavisky" (1974).

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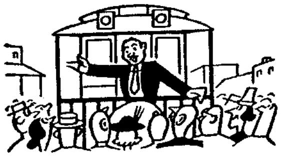
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
THE REAL THING

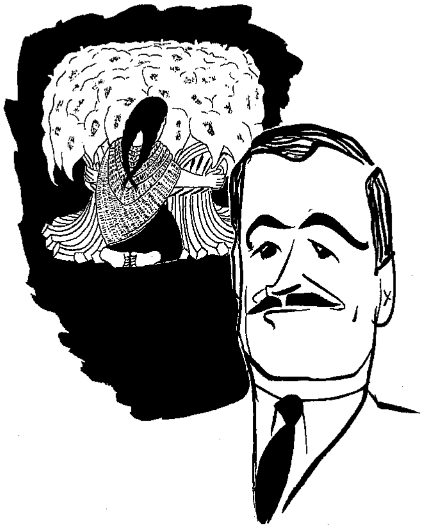


What happened at the polls in Mexico on Sunday, July 2nd, was a great deal more than the defeat of a sclerotic party too long in office. It was the fall of a regime; it was the collapse of an entire political system; it was something akin to a peaceful revolution. In electing Vicente Fox, the candidate of the National Action Party, to the Presidency and turning the Institutional Revolutionary Party out, the Mexican people put a definitive end to seven decades of bureaucratic dictatorship and voted to make their country, for the first time in its long history, a real democracy (albeit one whose future prospects are uncertain).

This was big news, so unexpectedly big that it took a couple of days to start sinking in. Even the *Times* seemed to be taken by surprise. On Monday, Fox's victory got a one-column headline; the story was displayed only a shade more prominently than reports on Harry Potter, the gray wolf, and a Ukrainian schooner's difficulties in the tall-ships parade. By Tuesday, though, the *Times* had come to its senses: the headline over its second-day story (MEXICO, VOTING IN NEW LEADER, BEGINS A POLITICAL SEA CHANGE) ran across four of the paper's six columns.

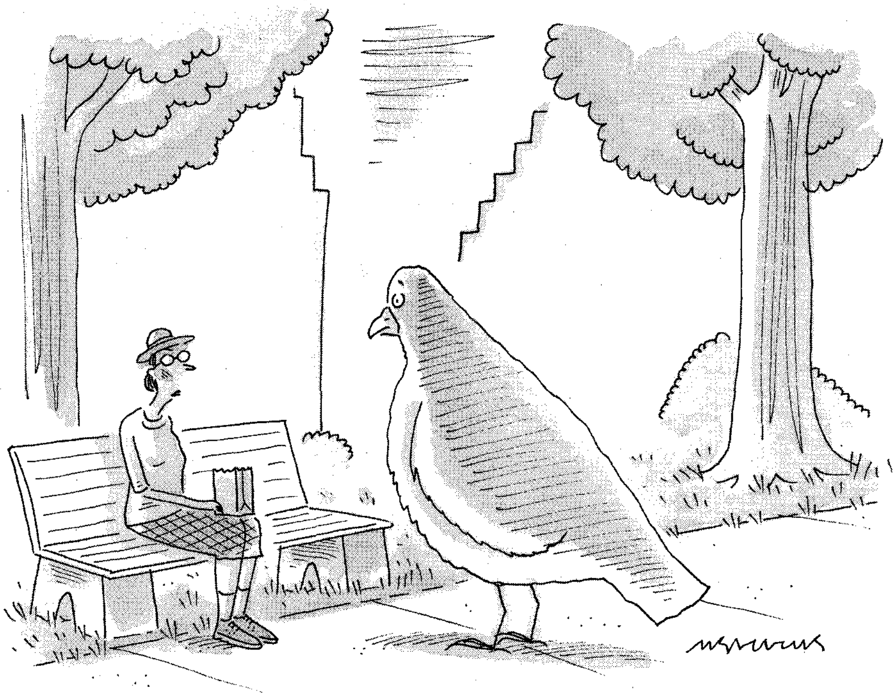
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

When it formally yields the Presidency, on December 1st, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (its acronym in Spanish, PRI, rhymes with "free," though only in English) will have held power in Mexico for seventy-one years—almost exactly as long as the Communist Party did in Russia. But, as dictatorships go, the two were at opposite moral poles. The PRI never attempted to control all of society's institutions. The late Octavio Paz, Mexico's greatest poet-essayist, once pointed out that the PRI "is not an ideological party, it is one of groups and interests—a circumstance which, if it has favored venality, has also saved us from the terrors of any sort of orthodoxy." Although freedom of the political press was, until a few years ago, tightly constricted, Mexico all along enjoyed an incredibly rich cultural and literary life. (Even Mexico's version of socialist realism—the murals of painters like Rivera, Orozco, and Siquieros—was brilliant.) Though the PRI was seldom squeamish about the selective use of violence and intimidation, it abjured mass murder and wholesale terror, preferring to rule through co-optation, cajolement, compromise, and populist manipulation. In its dotage, the regime was more like a big-city political machine (complete with spectacular corruption, electoral fraud, police brutality, gangland-style rubouts, jobs for the boys, and the Mexican equivalent of turkeys at Christmas) than like a mid-twentieth-century totalitarian party-state. This is not high praise, but it's not a distinction without a difference, either.



Vicente Fox

Most of all, the PRI brought peace and stability—a long respite from the cycle of civil wars, military coups, bloody repressions, and strutting caudillos that had come before in Mexico and continued to plague most of the rest of Latin America. The regime's centerpiece was the serial Presidency: each President served a single six-year term, had the right (after consultation with the elders of state, bureaucracy, and party) to choose his successor, and wielded nearly absolute power while in office but none at all once he had left it. For decades, the system—"an institutional dictatorship that was both limited and impersonal," in Paz's words—worked fairly well. But at some point (October 2, 1968, when soldiers massacred three hundred peace-



"I'm cutting you off."

• •

ful demonstrators in Mexico City, is often cited as the beginning of the end), the system's legitimacy began hemorrhaging. Recent Presidents have understood the need for change, and none understood it better than the incumbent, Ernesto Zedillo, who will be remembered, in a modest way, as Mexico's Gorbachev, its de Klerk. Zedillo saw to it that this year's election would be supervised by an independent commission, thus insuring a fair count and persuading voters that a trip to the polls might be worth the trouble.

President-elect Fox is a charismatic character—bristling mustache, booming voice, six and a half feet tall, even without his signature cowboy boots. He is also every Latin lefty's worst nightmare: not only does his party trace its origins to the reactionary Catholic proto-fascism of the nineteen-thirties; he made his name as the Mexican proconsul of the Coca-Cola Company—that ultimate symbol of Yankee imperialism, the corporate monster that expropriates the peasants' sugarcane and sells it back to them as empty calories. But it would be a mistake to see Fox's election as a right-wing triumph. (He himself, to judge from what he has been saying over the past few days, certainly doesn't see it that way.) The outcome had nothing to do with abortion or gay rights or even free-market economics (on which Fox and the PRI essentially agree); it had nothing to do with "issues" in the usual sense of the word. After a decade of worldwide authoritarian retreat, from Moscow and Pretoria to Seoul and Santiago, it was time for the Mexicans to get themselves a certifiably legitimate democratic government—the kind where the rascals are obliged to worry about getting thrown out. Fox was only the means—and he was the only means—to that end. That's reason enough to celebrate his victory.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

THE MUSICAL LIFE
JUST BROWSING WITH JAMES CARTER

"Every other *other* day," by his reckoning, James Carter drops by the Sam Ash orchestral-instruments store, on West Forty-eighth Street, to check out saxophones. "Anything new or interesting comes in, he wants to try it," a clerk there says. He is usually quite well looked after. James Carter walking into a saxophone store is a bit like Wayne Gretzky walking into a skate store, or Cary Grant entering a tailor's shop. A critic once called him the "jock of jazz," and he's been compared to Bo Jackson, partly because he's so oddly versatile—with a distinct voice on everything from the tiny sopranino saxophone to the foghorn bass—but also because standard virtuoso epithets seem too effete. Carter, who is thirty-one, plays swing, bebop, and avant-garde jazz with such facility that his fans range from neocon standard-bearers like Wynton Marsalis to firebrands like the late trumpeter Lester Bowie. He's also a bit fixated. Not even Coltrane spent most of his free hours checking out horns.

On a recent Thursday, Carter walked into the Sam Ash shop wearing a backward Adidas baseball cap, a black Adidas tracksuit, and spotless Adidas sneakers. Faces lit up; greetings were shouted. "What you got there?" someone asked him. "Sopranino," he said, holding up a small case. "Series two. The full-system jam." He'd brought it to try out mouthpieces but quickly set to examining a bunch of baritone saxes that were lined up in a glass case. A few minutes later, he was hefting two large, boxy cases and heading to a soundproof room in the back. "If I need a reed, I'll holler," he told a saleswoman, and closed the door.

Carter, who is six feet three, has the hooded eyes and offhand sex appeal of a rap star. But once he starts talking saxophones he seems more like a tenured medievalist. "See, I already like this horn," he said, examining a Selmer baritone. "The serial number's from the 1-18-900,000 series, a number very close to Lady T's. That means it's from 1964." Lady T is the name Carter gave to his first Selmer tenor. In his Upper West Side apartment he also has horns named Geisha Noir, Bubba, Baby Bubba, and Mahalia, the last being the prized 1926 Conn tenor he played in "Kansas City," the Robert Altman film. "That's a bad horn," he said appreciatively of Mahalia. "It's one of five made by a Swiss company called Das Blashaus—'the blowing house,' roughly translated from German."

Two years ago, Carter gave a two-and-a-half-hour lecture in Detroit entitled "Saxology," which traced the evolution of the instrument from Egypt in 2700 B.C. to the present. He imagines he would be sax-obsessed even if he didn't play the instrument. "There was always a fascination," he said. "Even when I first saw one on TV—I was checking out the curves and the keys." When he got his first horn, an old tarnished alto, he did something that it probably never occurred to Charlie Parker to do: he took the entire horn apart and reassembled it. "I'd get a certain section on and find I forgot this one key, and have to do the whole thing over again," he said. "It took seven hours." He was eleven.

Sitting cross-legged on a folding chair, Carter hoisted up a baritone, twisted a metal mouthpiece onto its neck, and let it rip. Three gut-quaking low notes nosed into a moody nocturne, ambled into a spieling waltz, and then abruptly flew up through two registers into a furious cadenza, octaves above the horn's normal range. Carter played some of the madcap incidental music from the "Little Rascals." "That's not bad for a knock-off," he said at last. Nonetheless, he decided to stick with the baritone that he'd just purchased from the estate of the Motown saxophonist Thomas (Beans) Bowles, who played with the Supremes and with Martha and the Vandellas.

Carter has just released, simultaneously, two very different CDs. On one, "Chasin' the Gypsy," which comprises softly romantic music from the thirties, he plays a rare F-mezzo saxophone that he bought on eBay. ("Conn made the horn from 1928 to 1930," he explained. "That was the same time they made the Conn-o-Sax, which was in the same key but looked like a heckelphone.") The other record, "Layin' In the Cut," is a gritty session of funk, improvised with downtown fusion performers like the guitarist Marc Ribot and the bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma.

After an hour or so of musical acrobatics at Sam Ash, Carter headed down to Roberto's Woodwind Repair Shop, on Forty-sixth Street. In the vestibule, he bumped into Josh Redman, who is the other important saxophone star to have emerged in the nineties. "Aha!" Carter yelled, and the two hugged up in a hip-hop-ish handshake.

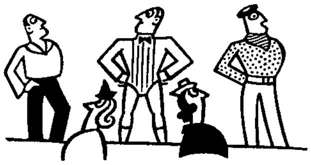
"What're you doing here?" Redman asked. "Coming down to expand your arsenal? To, like, a million?"

After a few minutes of catching up, Carter said goodbye and walked into Roberto's, where two tenors awaited him: a silver Keilwerth and a gold-plated Borgani. Picking up the Keilwerth, he played a broad improvised rhapsody, then broke into a hard-bop steeplechase that ran on for about a minute, a fevered little melodic brainstorm. Suddenly, the door to the studio across the hall slammed shut. Carter chuckled. "That's when you know it's hip," he said. "When the door gets closed, you're onto something."

—*Chris Norris*

RAG TRADE

RUSH HOUR FOR GUCCI

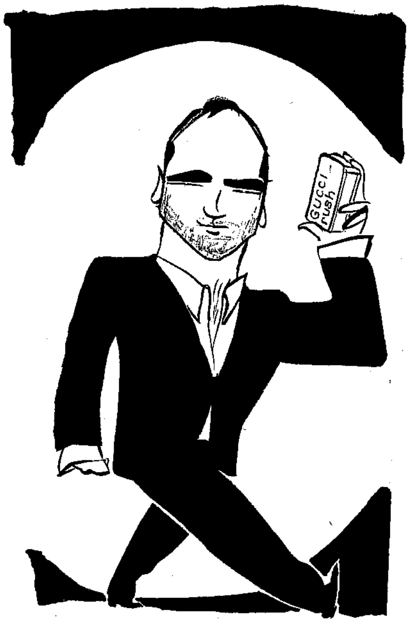


Milan is governed more completely by fashion than it has been by any other ruler since the Emperor Hadrian. Even so, there is something particularly excessive about the place when the men's collections are unveiled, at the end of June. The women's shows have a built-in glamour; there are always plenty of celebrities to watch, not to mention a Naomi or a Gisele, recognizable to all. But who can name his favorite male model? When these young men wander through the lobby of the Four Seasons Hotel between shows, they always seem a little lost.

So designers have to try harder with the men's shows. Their purpose is not so much to sell clothes as to capture the attention of the "fashion community"—the roving horde of reporters, publicists, buyers, and models who shuttle constantly between New York, London, Paris, and Milan. The rules are simple: the more outrageousness the better. This year the competition was brutal. For a while, people were talking about the Versace show—models covered in gold chains, giant bracelets, and belts that looked as if they belonged on a championship fighter, with hair big and blow-dried in the manner of Streisand circa "Yentl." Then Tom Ford showed up, and the attention of the horde shifted abruptly.

Ford, the creative director of Gucci, is the reigning rock star of the fashion world. His show in Milan featured men in bathing suits that looked like Mylar codpieces, leather bondage straps, shiny kimonos, and lots and lots of karate clothes decorated with flaming dragons. But that was just the warmup. The real Gucci event occurred later that night, at a party to celebrate the release of Ford's new fragrance, Gucci Rush for Men. "There is no better place to bring out a fragrance," he said backstage after the fashion show. "People get excited about these things here. They understand male vanity better than anywhere else." Italy is, after all, the Alps of male narcissism, a place where taxi-drivers dress in bespoke suits and police detectives look like jewel thieves. In Milan, the arrival of Rush for Men was regarded with the same excitement as the completion of the Human Genome Project in Washington. Gucci estimates that it will sell twenty-five million dollars' worth of the stuff in the first year. "Vanity is not a man-woman thing anymore," Ford said approvingly. "It is totally transgendered."

At a press conference about the launch, he explained that he had sampled hundreds of scents before arriving at Rush, which the Gucci people describe as a "woody, musky fragrance" that is "free: like an electron. On the edge of change but under control . . . spiking pleasure with madness." "We sit down around the table, and we smell at least twenty-five scents each time," Ford said. "And we do this six times. Then we narrow it to three or four, and I start wearing

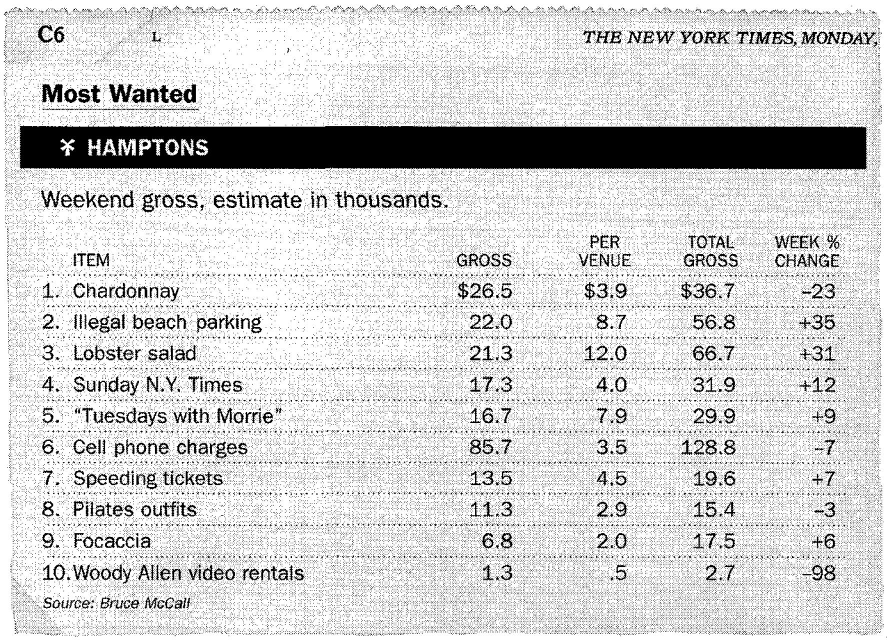


Tom Ford

them. If nobody says, 'You smell great,' there's something wrong."

It was impossible to get a whiff of Ford at the party. It was held in the most ostentatious venue in Milan, the Royal Pavilion of Mussolini's Stazione Centrale, which is among the most imposing Fascist monuments ever built. As disco music echoed off the Art Deco walls, Ford danced with Heather Graham, whom he had flown in to help adorn the crowd. Dozens of Gucci factotums, dressed in black or white—never both—wandered among the guests, handing out samples of the fragrance, which comes packaged inside a clear cube, but Ford didn't linger; he quickly swept up a great marble staircase to a private room. "Tom just loves this place," one of his assistants said as she stood in the center of the hall beneath an enormous chandelier made of Murano glass. "It's the perfect place for the new modern man. It's just so Rush."

—*Michael Specter*



C6 L *THE NEW YORK TIMES, MONDAY,*

Most Wanted

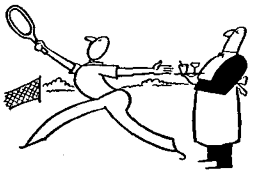
✱ HAMPTONS

Weekend gross, estimate in thousands.

ITEM	GROSS	PER VENUE	TOTAL GROSS	WEEK % CHANGE
1. Chardonnay	$26.5	$3.9	$36.7	–23
2. Illegal beach parking	22.0	8.7	56.8	+35
3. Lobster salad	21.3	12.0	66.7	+31
4. Sunday N.Y. Times	17.3	4.0	31.9	+12
5. "Tuesdays with Morrie"	16.7	7.9	29.9	+9
6. Cell phone charges	85.7	3.5	128.8	–7
7. Speeding tickets	13.5	4.5	19.6	+7
8. Pilates outfits	11.3	2.9	15.4	–3
9. Focaccia	6.8	2.0	17.5	+6
10. Woody Allen video rentals	1.3	.5	2.7	–98

Source: Bruce McCall

POSTSCRIPT
WALTER MATTHAU'S JOKES



Walter Matthau, the great comic actor, died last week at the age of seventy-nine, and everybody who loves to laugh is going to miss seeing him on the movie screen. A lot of his friends are going to miss hanging out with him offscreen as well, because he liked nothing more than to keep them laughing with his own special brand of jokes. The jokes came out of him as a necessity, a natural part of his existence. His theories about joking came out the same way.

If you find yourself reading a joke or a quotation from him, it is good to pretend that you're hearing his voice, a voice unmistakably New York but unlike anybody else's—drawling, nasal, slightly didactic, signalling neutrality, and incontrovertible except when he was contradicting himself. For example:

"All champion Ping-Pong players are very conservative poker players."

"Walter, are you sure?"

"No."

He enjoyed being Jewish, and he told good Jewish jokes: "A Jew finds that everybody in his neighborhood is suddenly rushing to get out of town. He asks why.

" 'Don't you know? A lion is loose in the streets.'

" 'Is that good or bad for the Jews?' "

He used to say that his violinist friend Itzhak Perlman told him the best Jewish jokes.

"Here's one that I think came from Itzhak," Walter would offer. "In a small town in Russia, there are three brothers—Beryl, Cheryl, and Schmeryl. Beryl says, 'I'm going to America, and I'm gonna change my name from Beryl to Buck.' Cheryl says, 'I'm going to America, and I'm gonna change my name from Cheryl to Chuck.' And Schmeryl says, 'I'm not going.' "

Hearing this, Walter's wife, Carol, would say sweetly, "Shouldn't there be a Feryl?"

Walter always reminded people that he had never forgotten his dog-tag number as a United States Army Air Corps staff sergeant in the Second World War, and he would recite it often (No. 12062683). He liked telling this joke about himself in the Army:

"When I was stationed at Keesler Field, Mississippi, one of the guys said to me, 'You're lucky you're a Jew.' I asked why. He said, 'You don't act like a Jew. You gamble, you smoke, you drink.' So I asked again, Why am I lucky? He said, 'Because the Jews are gonna set you up in a *store*.' "

"Here's my Billy Wilder joke," Walter would say. "Billy Wilder yells at me, 'Relax, goddammit!' "

"Here's my joke about the Beverly Hills agent and producer," he would say.

"The Agent: 'How about Marilyn So-and-So for the part?'

"The Producer: 'She's too tall.'

"The Agent: 'Have you seen her lately?' "

Several years ago, in Hollywood, Walter took a visitor to the tennis court of the late Samuel Goldwyn to play doubles. Walter wasn't much of a tennis player, but he knew the visitor loved to play, and he was being gracious. On the way, he abruptly launched into a joke without announcing that he was going to tell it.

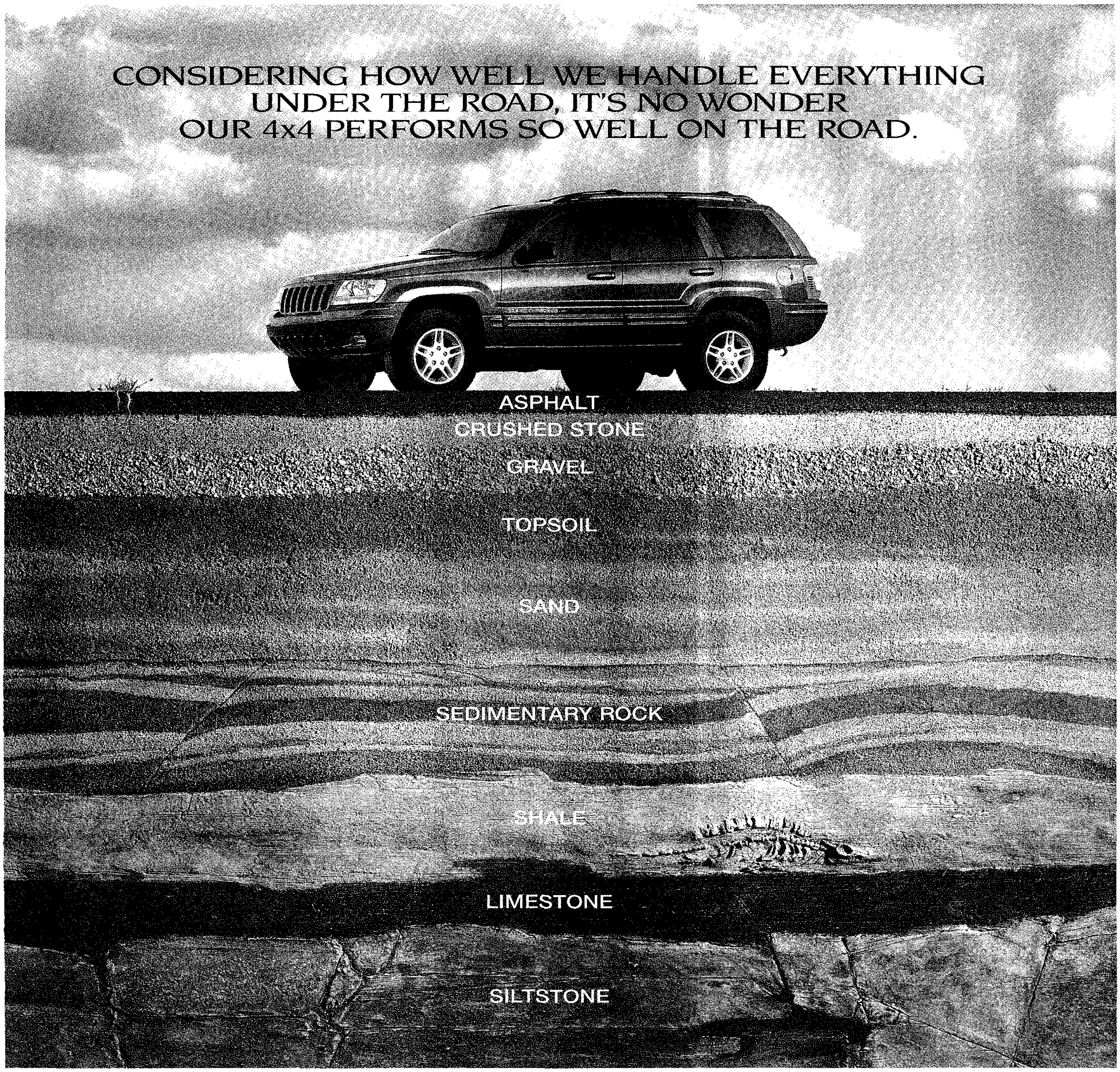
"I have only one Sam Goldwyn story. One day, Sam Goldwyn said to me, 'I ran into your friend Billy Wilder.'

" 'Where?'

" 'At my house.' "

On Sam Goldwyn's tennis court, Walter knocked himself out with extremely unorthodox swings and misses, and he ran after the balls in a peculiar, soccerlike gallop. Gasping for breath, he said, "I can see the headlines—'WALTER MATTHAU DROPS DEAD ON SAM GOLDWYN'S TENNIS COURT.' And everybody says, 'I didn't know Walter Matthau played tennis.' "

—*Lillian Ross*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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
WHY SALESMEN NEVER DIE

Shortly after John Patterson shelled out sixty-five hundred dollars to buy the National Cash Register Company, in 1884, he realized that he had made a mistake. No one wanted cash registers in 1884. So Patterson tried to get his sixty-five hundred dollars back. When he failed, he decided that people only *thought* they didn't want his cash registers, and that he would show them different. But Patterson didn't believe that advertising alone could accomplish this. He needed salesmen who could go into a saloon or a general store and persuade the tavern owner or shopkeeper that a cash register was a good idea. And so he created the first modern sales force.

Before Patterson came along, most goods were sold by wholesale "drummers," who would travel on their own for months at a time before returning to the central office, perhaps with a pile of orders and perhaps not. Patterson had a better idea. He gave salesmen exclusive territories, which enabled them to develop a core of regular customers, and he gave them sales quotas based on the size of the territory. He held the first sales conventions. And he gave his salesmen blueprints for selling, the first of which, "How I Sell National Cash Registers," was a word-for-word transcript of his best salesman's standard pitch to customers. Patterson did for selling what Frederick Winslow Taylor and Henry Ford would do for manufacturing, and the results were just as impressive.

The impact of Patterson's innovation was also, like Taylor's and Ford's, long-lasting. At mid-century, you couldn't find a big American company that didn't have cadres of blue-suited go-getters who could push space heaters in the Sahara. But who needs those bourbon-drinking, golf-playing, backslapping relics when you have business-to-business portals, Web sites where faceless suppliers bid against each other on the Net? What use are they in a time of odorless, colorless, frictionless capitalism, populated by Empowered Customers who are a few mouse clicks away from the manufacturer's invoice? Salesmen? Please, they're so 1952.

But then there's Xerox to consider. A year and a half ago, the company's bright new C.E.O., Rick Thoman, announced that the company would be reorganizing its sales force, so that reps were assigned not to territories but to types of companies. (Instead of dealing just with Houston firms, say, they'd deal just with software firms.) Thoman thought this transition would be a smooth one. And it would have been if you could move salesmen around the way you can move assembly-line workers around.

As they say in "The Music Man," though, you gotta know the territory. These were salesmen who spent their days cultivating personal relationships with their customers. Severing those ties didn't slow things down for a couple of weeks. It has screwed things up for the past eighteen months. During that period, Xerox has missed Wall Street's earnings estimates three times. Its stock price has fallen by two-thirds. And Rick Thoman, the C.E.O., was given his walking papers.

ERIC PALMA

The lesson here is that salesmen still rule. Most business gets done on a one-to-one basis: somebody buying a quarter-million-dollar copier isn't interested in one-click ordering. As David Dorsey showed in great detail in his 1994 book on Xerox salesmen, "The Force," customers want a person behind that box. They want someone who'll ask about their daughter's Little League team and invite them to the Firestone Country Club for an all-day outing in the middle of the week. They want someone who can walk them through the technology, and they want someone to blame if things go wrong. From a purely economic point of view, these concerns are largely irrelevant. If you're running a business, they're anything but.

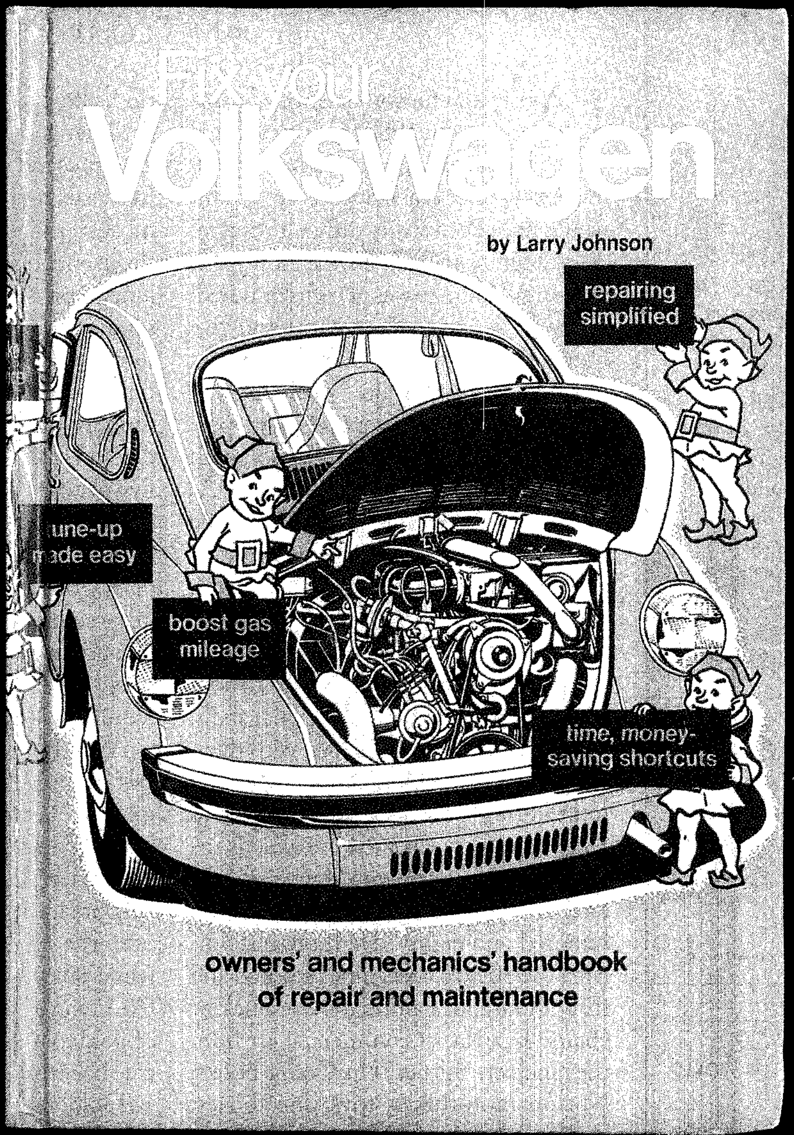
That's why every successful New Economy company—just look at Oracle, Cisco, or Dell—is powered by a sales force with a gift for shmooze, and why fast-growing companies add salesmen as quickly as they can. (The data-storage giant E.M.C., for instance, is looking to hire as many as a thousand salesmen this year alone.) In fact, when companies run into trouble it's often not because there's a flaw in their latest chip but because their sales force forgot that crucial mantra from "Glengarry Glen Ross": "Always Be Closing." Just last week, the software maker Entrust saw its stock drop more than fifty per cent because it hadn't closed enough sales in the current quarter.

This doesn't mean that the practice of salesmanship is unchanging. It's now voguish to talk about "relationship marketing," also known as "strategic account management"—the idea being that salesmen, instead of just trying to push the latest product on a customer, should spend more time learning about what that customer needs to make his business run better. Rather than selling products, salesmen would be offering "solutions." What's ironic is that Thoman reorganized Xerox with relationship marketing in mind, figuring that if salesmen specialized in a given industry they'd be able to get closer to clients. He may still be proved right.

National Cash Register—now sleekly restyled N.C.R.—has gone high-tech. Its offerings include C.R.M. optimizers and data-warehousing systems. But some things haven't changed. "At the end of the day, the customer wants that one person he can call and talk to," says Bob Fair, who's in sales with N.C.R.'s Teradata Solutions Group, and who's on the road three days a week. "The heart of our work is still eye-to-eye selling. If we're not doing eye-to-eye selling, then we're not selling." Old man Patterson would be proud.

—*James Surowiecki*

June 7, 1974. Lost during long, strange trip.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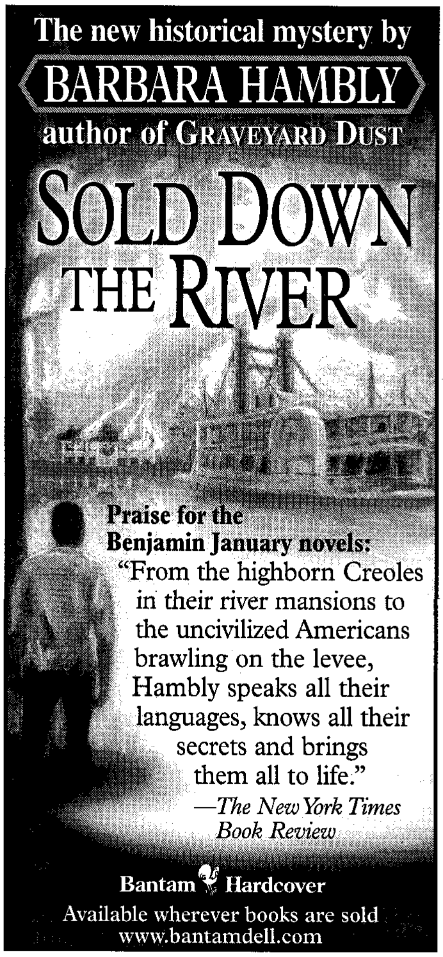

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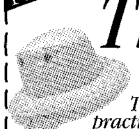

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DEPARTMENT OF WEALTH

GOLD PEOPLE

Will they ever be rich again?

BY JAMES COLLINS

Let's say that for some reason you decided back in 1980 that you wanted to lose money on your investments over the next twenty years. Succeeding in this would have been a very difficult thing to do, as it turns out. In 1980, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was at eight hundred. Today, it is around ten thousand five hundred. Even stocks that have been out of favor recently—"value" stocks and the stocks of small companies—have performed poorly only by comparison with their "growth" and high-tech rivals. As the over-all market has risen during the last twenty years, virtually every mutual fund investing in United States stocks has made money, regardless of style, specialty, or competence.

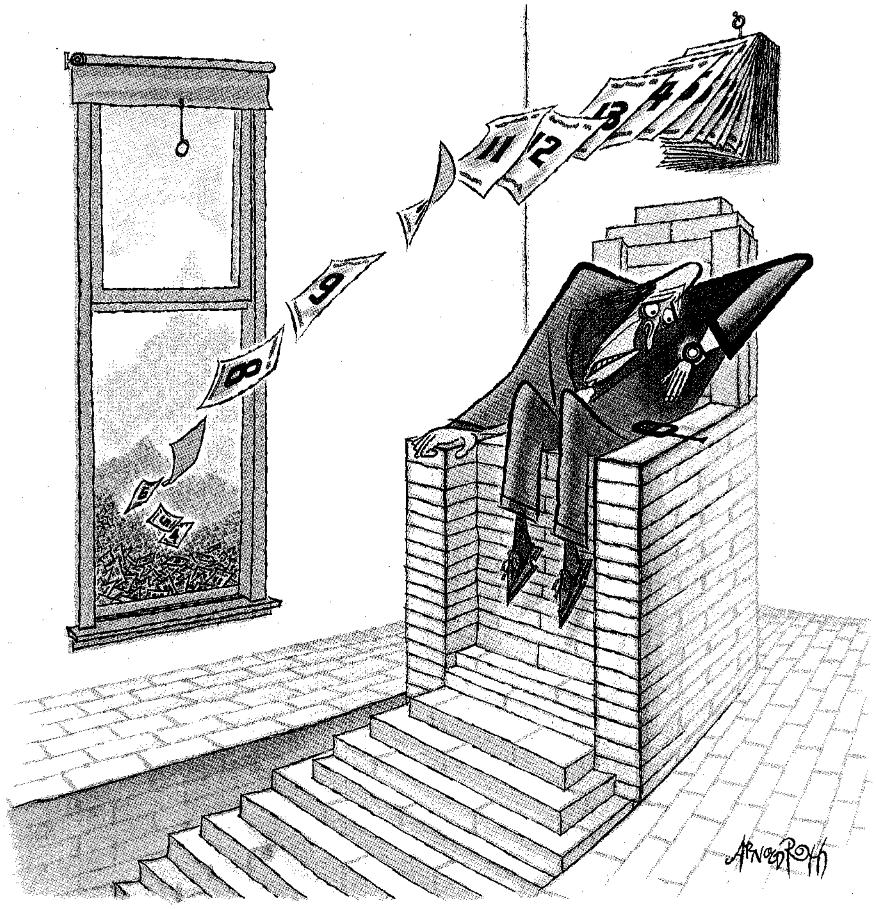
If it was almost impossible to lose money by investing in stocks, what about bonds? You would have failed with them as well, in all likelihood; aside from the interest they paid, the bonds bought in 1980 would have soared in value as interest rates came down. Maybe real estate? Sorry. A classic six that sold for a hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars in 1980 now costs nine hundred and forty thousand. Paintings? Up. Stickley chairs? Up. Racist commercial art from the nineteen-thirties? Up. Comic books, Norton motorbikes, toys, snuffboxes, stamps, coins, manuscripts, majolica—it seems that no matter what you bought in 1980 your investment would have increased in value by the year 2000.

There was, however, one investment that would have lost you money, causing not only financial distress but also shame and humiliation. That investment was gold. On January 21, 1980, the price of an ounce of gold on the New York Commodities Exchange was eight hundred and twenty-five dollars and fifty cents. Today, the price is about two hundred and eighty dollars an ounce. In other words, from its peak in 1980, the value of an ounce of gold has fallen about seventy per cent. During the same period, the Dow Jones rose twelve hundred per cent. Think of it: by investing ten thousand dollars in America Online five years ago, you would now have almost six million dollars; by investing ten thousand dollars in the S. & P. 500 index, you would now have thirty thousand dollars. But if you had invested ten thousand dollars in United States Global Gold Shares, a leading gold mutual fund, you would now have fifteen hundred dollars. You would have lost eighty-five per cent of your money.

So, while the popular crowd has rocked on at the bull-market beach party, gold investors have been holed up in somebody's basement, with two beers among them, and no girls. Nevertheless, a few goldbugs carry on. To do so has required unexampled forbearance and tenacity. It has also required a particular cast of mind. Goldbugs tend to be more intellectual than other investors, more interested in ideas and in history, and once they get a theory in their heads they are incapable of letting it go. Even over the phone, they grab your lapel while talking about it. Some investors, like George Soros, may move in and out of gold to make a trading profit, but the true believers stay put.

Goldbugs believe that gold is money, and that only gold is money. "Gold has been used as money for at least three thousand years," said Harry Bingham, a longtime presence on the gold scene. (He wears South African two-rand coins as cufflinks.) "It's mentioned in the second chapter of Genesis. I'm not trying to be religious about it, but there are at least eighty references in Exodus. Even this ridiculous new dollar coin we have—they call it *golden*." To goldbugs, the pieces of paper and electronic graphemes that people call money are an illusion. Relying on them results in a too-rapid expansion of money and credit, which may produce a boom for a while but always ends in panic and devastation.

The way to bring order to our economy and the world trading system, the goldbugs say, is to operate under the gold standard. In its strictest form, this would require that every dollar be redeemable for gold held by the United States Treasury, which would limit the amount of money that the government could create. That sounds less eccentric when we remember that vestiges of the gold standard survived until 1971. Few gold people believe a return to the gold standard is possible now (although conservatives like Jack Kemp did discuss it seriously in the early nineteen-eighties), but they cannot shake the conviction that gold will rise again. Indeed, every time the stock market wobbles—as with the recent decline of Internet stocks—the closer goldbugs believe the day of reckoning to be, and the day when a sobered world returns to gold's discipline.



Once a gold investor gets a theory in his head, he is incapable of letting it go.

ARNOLD ROTH

In the meantime, though, life has been tough. "It's like being a Christian in the early days of the Roman Empire," Harry Bingham said. Another gold investor remarked, "It's been like the bubonic plague. It's like being in combat. You have to think about your fundamental life experiences." And another: "My wife is always telling me about people who are making a fortune. 'You and your gold,' she says. I feel like Rodney Dangerfield. I don't get no respect."

One person who knows well what it has felt like to be a gold investor is a man named Michael Levinson. Levinson has been involved with gold investments for thirty years. Of the past twenty, he says, "It's been extremely difficult. Extremely depressing. It's been murder." It *has* been murder. At one time, Levinson made millions of dollars from gold. He lost that fortune, but he still believes that gold will bring him new riches. He calls himself a dreamer.

Levinson is sixty-six years old. He is of medium height and build and has bristly short, white hair, and sometimes, when he is agitated, his mouth works in a way that makes it seem independent of the rest of his face. Levinson's eyes are clear, with just a touch of wildness. He talks loudly, with a rasp, and he is restless, almost ranting at times, as he describes what he has endured and his dream for the future.

I talked to him on the phone and during a visit to Vancouver, where he lives with his wife in half of a duplex house in an upper-middle-class neighborhood. The place is comfortable if a bit cramped, and during one of our talks we sat in the living area. The room was decorated with chintz and stripes; a couple of West African masks hung on the walls. Levinson wore a Brooks Brothers polo shirt and drank a Scotch ("Don't let me get going too much with my Scotch," he said) and was in his stocking feet.

Levinson grew up in Brooklyn, the only son of middle-class parents whose own parents had been immigrants. He went to Harvard, where he studied politics. Zbigniew Brzezinski was his section leader, and McGeorge Bundy oversaw his thesis. After graduating Phi Beta Kappa, he eventually went on to Harvard Law School but quit after six months, and by the early sixties he had arrived on Wall Street. For a couple of years, he worked at Bear Stearns, sitting with Alan (Ace) Greenberg, the future head of the company and a celebrated Wall Street figure.

"I got interested in gold in 1969," Levinson said. "Since I studied politics and history in college, I needed something more than buying I.B.M. and Xerox. I'm not a businessman. I took one economics course at Harvard—Ec 1. Galbraith taught it. I hated it. I got an A. I don't like accounting. The reason I liked gold was that it was political." For someone interested in gold from a historical point of view, the late sixties was a particularly rich period. At that time, foreign central banks could redeem dollars for gold from the United States Treasury at the rate of thirty-five dollars an ounce. But America was losing too much gold under this system, and after several crises it was abandoned, in 1971, when President Nixon "closed the gold window."

Gold flourishes in times of uncertainty, and, with the oil shocks and political troubles of the early seventies, its price started to rise. That's when Levinson, who was then working for another brokerage house, began to focus exclusively on the shares of gold-mining companies. "I was probably doing more business in gold-mining shares than all other brokers put together," he said. Levinson's clients were major banks and pension funds and wealthy individuals. "Between 1975 and 1976, the price went from a hundred and eighty-six dollars and twenty cents to a hundred and two dollars and fifty cents," he said. "I had a longtime client in Brussels who sent me a message: 'If you ever step foot on the European continent again I will personally destroy you.' He could have—he was very big in armaments and steel. Later, he made a fortune in gold." One well-known gold investor killed himself when the gold price dropped.

Levinson founded his own firm in 1977, when the price of gold began to climb again. "The war in Afghanistan, inflation, Jimmy Carter—all of these contributed," he said. "Some days, the price rose fifty dollars." Levinson travelled all over the world trying to persuade people to buy shares of gold-mining companies, whose stock prices generally rise (and fall) more steeply than the price of gold itself. "I remember the shares of one company went from a dollar to fifty-six dollars within a few years. My clients were enjoying unknown prosperity by having relied on my advice."

Levinson spoke about these times in an emphatic way, but without bravado, and always with dramatic irony, since we both knew how the story would end. Sometimes, in a moment of particular indignation, his head would loll back and forth. We had come to the peak of his career. "The best call I ever made in the business was written up in the *Financial Times'* weekly magazine on December 31, 1979," he said. The price of gold was rising, and the magazine had asked Levinson what he would do. "I said take profits," Levinson recalled. A few weeks later, the price of gold had gone above eight hundred. "We were in Raffles Hotel in Singapore. I stayed up three days and three nights trying to get everyone to sell their shares. If gold went to eight-twenty-five, I felt it had run its course." Levinson's philosophy, he said, was "When something is easy to sell, I know it's going down." In 1980, Levinson made five million dollars.

It was also the year he got married. His wife, Akiko, sat by quietly during most of our conversations, making the occasional softening comment and sometimes indicating to Levinson that he was being indiscreet. (At dinner, there was a debate over whether she was kicking him under the table.) A pretty woman in her mid-forties, Akiko is the descendant of samurai; her father was a prominent businessman and politician in her native city of Noda. She and Levinson met when she was a stewardess on Japan Air Lines, and Levinson got into a dispute with her about whether he had paid for a bottle of duty-free perfume. He courted her at the Hôtel Bristol in Paris. They wanted to go back for their twentieth wedding anniversary but decided they couldn't afford it. However, their youngest son, who was in Paris on a school trip, went to the Bristol bar with a friend and had a Coke. (Levinson and Akiko have three children; he has three others from a previous marriage.)

"Akiko has never known a bull market in gold," Levinson said. The year they married was the peak of both the gold price and Levinson's business. He said, "When gold fell to five-fifty, in '81, I ran ads in every paper—the *International Herald Tribune*, the Asian *Wall Street Journal*—saying, 'Buy back all your gold mining shares.' I felt it had come down enough. Then it went to two-ninety. That was really the beginning of the end of my financial success." Levinson made a big blunder with his own personal account. He bought call options, which would be valuable only if the price of gold went up, and when they expired, worthless, he lost a fortune. In 1984, he had to close his firm, because he couldn't maintain the twenty-five-thousand-dollar net capital required by the Securities and Exchange Commission. He and Akiko, who had been living in a large apartment on East Eighty-fifth Street, moved to a farmhouse they owned in the Berkshires. "Akiko and I joked about its being a strategic withdrawal," Levinson said. "But it was really a retreat. It was a defeat." Levinson wrote a newsletter about gold investing, but it never had more than a hundred subscribers. He tried to become a consultant to mining companies, but that earned him only a meagre income. Then, in 1988, he had a heart attack.

After all this hardship, you might think that Levinson would have tried to get into a different business. Not at all. He concluded that he should become even more deeply committed to gold. Akiko recalls a friend asking her what her husband did. "I told her that he wanted to discover the biggest gold mine in the world. After that, she didn't ask anymore." Levinson believed that the way to profit if gold took off again was to own gold that was actually in the

"If it were my car, I'd disconnect it from the battery recharger, take it home, and let it die in its own garage."

ground. He decided to buy a gold mine.

In 1989, the Levinsons moved to Vancouver because it is a center for gold investing in Canada. Levinson formed a company called Gold Canyon Resources, which has almost eighteen hundred shareholders and owns a six-and-a-half-mile tract of land in the mining district in Ontario. Levinson believes that the land could contain millions of ounces of gold.

"We have had years of spectacular results from two hundred and ninety-two drill holes," he said. "The problem is that it has been irregular. We'll get very good results in one hole and then, fifty feet away, we'll have poor results." Some geologists believe that there is a lot of gold in the land. "It should have a mother lode," one of them told me. "My feeling is that we should get underground and get mining."

But mining isn't so easy. Levinson said he was having "an extremely difficult time" persuading someone to give him a drawing account of two hundred million dollars. He used to be able to raise millions by picking up the phone, but now people won't even return his calls. One of his sons works for a prominent investment bank in New York and introduced him to someone there, but Levinson hasn't heard back. He faxed his old colleague Ace Greenberg, who said he wasn't interested in gold.

Levinson pays five hundred dollars a month to rent space in his accountant's office, and I visited him there one day. "A lot of shareholders like the fact that we have never had fancy offices," Levinson said. "We haven't paid ourselves salaries for two years." Levinson has survived on savings and by patching together money here and there. Four years ago, when the company announced some extremely promising drill results, the price of Gold Canyon reached twenty dollars a share, which meant that on paper the Levinsons were worth sixty million dollars. At the time, he told friends he wouldn't dream of selling a single share. "I look like a big jerk right now," he says. Gold Canyon's shares today sell for forty cents. "This is the only investment we have," Levinson told me. "It's unreal to me that shares of Internet stocks can sell for five hundred dollars and the companies have nothing. And I have millions of ounces of gold in a zoned mining area near the surface, and our shares sell for pennies. It's excruciatingly painful."

Le Cap d'Antibes.
Tuscany.
M. Twohy

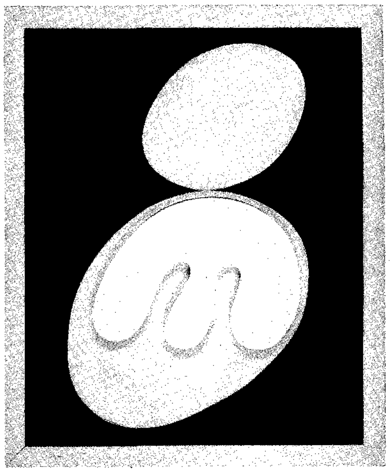
Even if Levinson does control vast deposits of gold, they won't be of any use to him unless the price of gold goes up. The cost of mining an ounce right now is greater than what he could sell it for. In talking to many gold investors, I heard one joke, and it runs like this: "There are only two people in the world who understand the price of gold. They both work for the Bank of England, and they disagree."

There are three conditions under which the price of gold could rise. First, demand for gold as a commodity—as a metal that is used in industry, jewelry, and dentistry—could outstrip supply. Second, hedge-fund managers and other speculators who have sold gold short could begin to buy gold in order to cover their short positions. Third, and most important, gold could return to favor as an investment. When panic hits the current unstable system, goldbugs expect investors to rush to buy gold, which they consider to be the one true store of value. Even if investors put, say, five per cent of their portfolios into gold for diversification, the price would rise handsomely. The most reasonable gold proponents advocate the five-per-cent approach (although when you listen to them you sense they are restraining themselves).

Goldbugs argue that any one of these scenarios is plausible. The market remains unconvinced. Andy Smith, a commodities analyst in the London branch of the Mitsui trading company, laughed when I mentioned one gold investor's theory about a supply shortage. "We're going on a fifty-five- or sixty-year aboveground supply," he said. "Gold has been marginalized because the world has changed. We have the most robust financial system we've ever had. The thing undermining the many-thousand-year myth of gold is *progress!*" The world economic system is far more open and flexible today. Citizens in one country can much more easily own assets in another, so they don't have to rely on gold as a way to store their wealth. Goldbugs worry about discipline in the trade and monetary systems. "But the best anchor is the discipline of markets," Smith said. "Sure, gold is on the periodic table. Why not choose boron? It's over. Of course it's over."

That news will be difficult for Michael Levinson to accept. "Every day, I want to give up," he said. "But what do I do? I have eighteen hundred shareholders. We have three kids to educate. It's brutal. There are days when I have to force myself out of bed to see the gold price. I just hope I'm going to be right one more time." ♦

MAKING CHOICES



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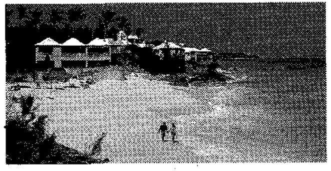

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

DYLAN! THE SPECIAL

BY BEN GREENMAN

In the tradition of fellow sixties radicals Sonny & Cher, Bob Dylan has signed a deal to star in a one-hour TV show. . . . The exact nature of the variety-show-style program is being kept under wraps.—*ABC News, May 8th.*

Fade in: Suburban home, interior. Tim Conway is standing by the window.

TIM CONWAY: It's such a nice afternoon. I think I'll just go sit in my easy chair and read a magazine.

(*Doorbell rings.*)

TIM CONWAY: Who is it?

(*Opens door to reveal Bob Dylan in mailman's uniform.*)

TIM CONWAY: Oh, it's the mailman. Do you have a package for me?

DYLAN: (*unintelligible*).

TIM CONWAY: Uh-huh.

DYLAN: (*unintelligible*).

TIM CONWAY: Uh-huh.

DYLAN: (*unintelligible*).

TIM CONWAY: But I don't own a duck!

(*Harvey Korman enters with duck.*)

DYLAN: (*unintelligible*).

TIM CONWAY: I have never seen this man before!

DUCK: I'm not a man, I'm a duck.

DYLAN: (*unintelligible*).

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Fade in: Dylan, dressed in a Bob Mackie caftan, performs "Every Grain of Sand."

•

Fade in: Alec Baldwin stands on a TV game-show set, beside John Goodman and Catherine O'Hara.

ALEC BALDWIN: Hello. I'm Lance Masters, and this is "What the Hell Is Bob Dylan Saying?," the quiz-show craze that's sweeping the nation. Today, we pit our returning champion, Dom Sheldon, against a new challenger, Jill Robins. Now put your hands together and give a warm "What the Hell Is Bob Dylan Saying?" welcome to Bob Dylan. Hello, Bob.

DYLAN: (*unintelligible*).

ALEC BALDWIN: No, I don't know where to get the kind of gas that only works in airplanes. But let's get started. Our challenger, Jill, gets first shot at the board. Jill, as you know, you have to select one of two categories—either Incoherent Philosophical Musings or Potpourri.

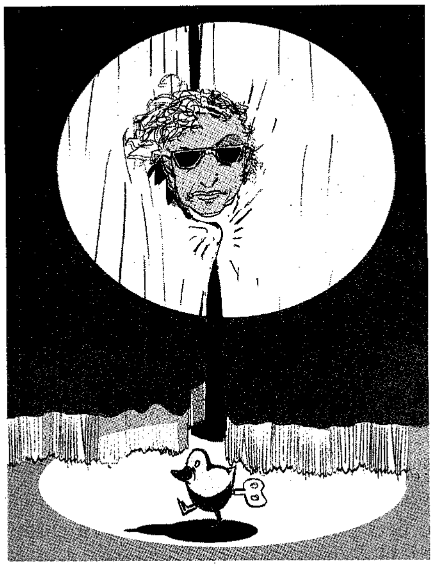
CATHERINE O'HARA: O.K., Lance. I'll take Incoherent Philosophical Musings.

ALEC BALDWIN: Bob, lay it on her.

DYLAN: (*unintelligible*).

CATHERINE O'HARA: What the hell did he say?

ALEC BALDWIN: Exactly, Jill. We need a guess, though. The clock is running out.



CATHERINE O'HARA: Well, it sounded like he said, "Loretta isn't getting any rest on Imitation Hill."

ALEC BALDWIN: Oh, I'm sorry, Jill. Let's go to our champion, Dom.

JOHN GOODMAN: Was it "The red dawn isn't getting dressed up in Limboville," Lance?

ALEC BALDWIN: Yes, it was, Dom. Now you control the board.

JOHN GOODMAN: O.K. Incoherent Philosophical Musings for me, too.

ALEC BALDWIN: Bob?

DYLAN: (*unintelligible*).

JOHN GOODMAN: "It's all about trains and rails and flaky paint"?

ALEC BALDWIN: Close, Dom, but no cigar. Jill, would you like to guess?

CATHERINE O'HARA: "It's all about trains and rails and flaky paint, Mama"?

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ALEC BALDWIN: Yes. Remember, Dom: every syllable counts. Jill, you now have a chance to win the game.

CATHERINE O'HARA: I'll go with Potpourri.

ALEC BALDWIN: Do your worst, Bob.

DYLAN: (*unintelligible*).

CATHERINE O'HARA: That noise wasn't even human, Lance.

ALEC BALDWIN: Judges? Yes. We'll accept that. It was, in fact, Bob's impression of a cow reading Allen Ginsberg's "Kaddish." Jill, you're our new champion. Bob, tell her what she's won.

DYLAN: (*unintelligible*).

CATHERINE O'HARA: I won a basket of monstrous aggression, a bicycle that doesn't know its own mind, and three weird things that happened down in Okinawa?

ALEC BALDWIN: You're a very lucky lady. Join us tomorrow night on "What the Hell Is Bob Dylan Saying?"

•

Fade in: Synagogue. Eli Wallach, in rabbinic dress, addresses a group of young rabbis played by Ben Stiller, Jon Stewart, and Jerry Seinfeld.

ELI WALLACH: You have reached the final stage in your quest to become rabbis. I want you to understand, though, that being a rabbi isn't only about leading a prayer service; it's about counselling the members of your congregation. Do all of you understand that?

BEN STILLER: Yes.

JON STEWART: Yes.

JERRY SEINFELD: I think I understand.

ELI WALLACH: O.K. As part of today's final examination, we're going to bring in Mr. Silverstein. He has a problem that he'll explain.

(*Dylan enters.*)

DYLAN: (*unintelligible*).

(*The three junior rabbis stare in open-mouthed silence.*)

BEN STILLER: Uh . . .

JERRY SEINFELD: Er . . .

JON STEWART: How does a sixty-year-old man even get hold of a Pokémon water pistol, let alone get it stuck up there?

DYLAN: (*unintelligible*).

BEN STILLER: I have to go vomit. I'll be back in forty-five minutes or so.

JERRY SEINFELD: I'm not even sure I believe in God. Not anymore.

•

Fade in: Dylan stands on darkened stage.

DYLAN: (*unintelligible*).

(*Dylan waves good night.*) ♦

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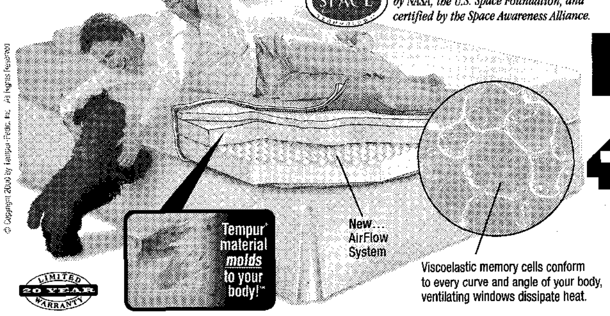
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ANNALS OF PARENTHOOD

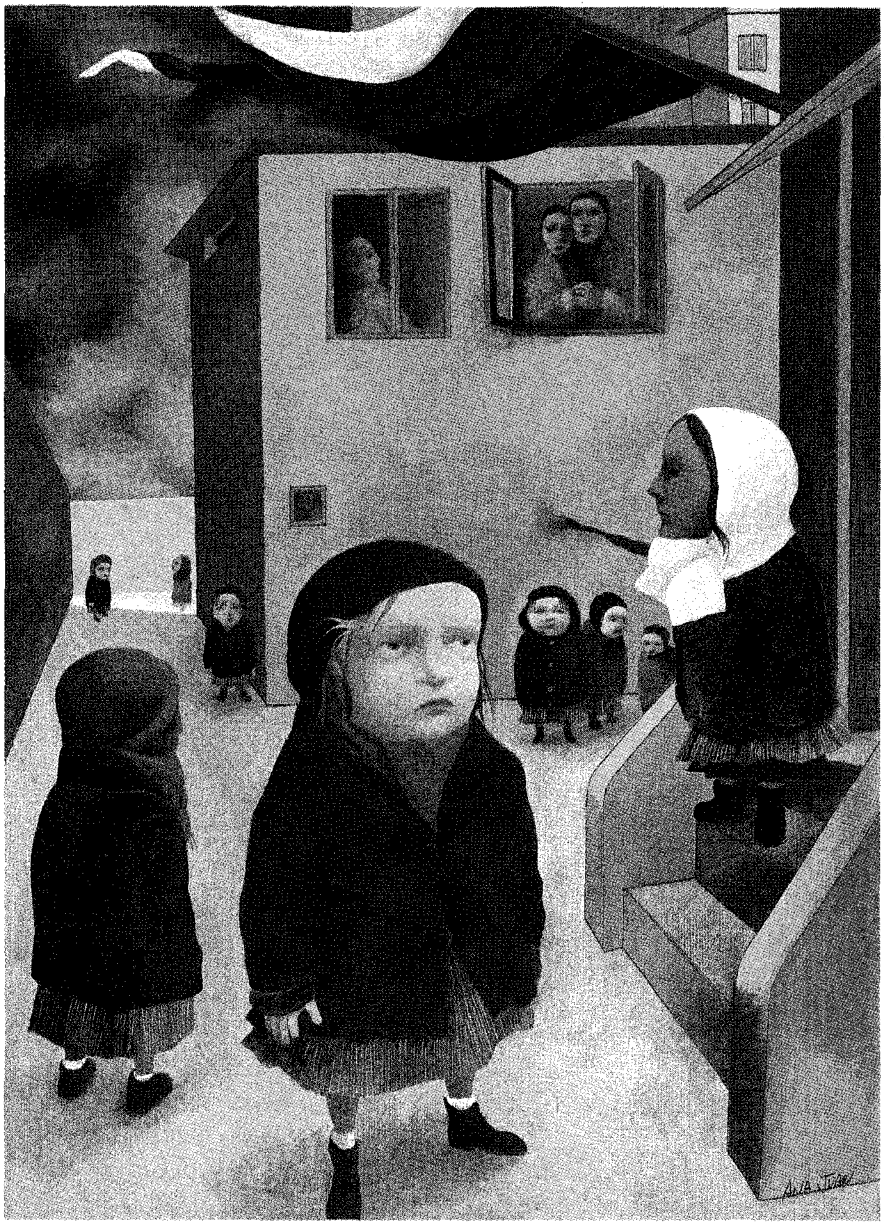
THE ORPHAN RANGER

How do you measure the harm done to a child?

BY MELISSA FAY GREENE

In the half-dark of a small Greenwich Village living room crammed with lithographs, woodcuts, and books, Dr. Jane Aronson sat watching videos until well past midnight. She snapped the cassettes in and out of the VCR and made notes on a legal pad. Each film, which lasted between three and four minutes, had been inexpertly made at an orphanage in Russia or Eastern Europe and featured a child available for adoption. The films had been sent to the doctor by prospective parents who were being asked by an adoption agency to make up their minds: yes, we want to take this child, or no, we cannot.

Aronson founded a clinic at Winthrop-University Hospital, in Mineola, New York, called the International Adoption Medical Consultation Services, in 1993, but has recently moved her medical practice to New York City. She has a lanky build and a handsome, aquiline face. She was dressed in a loose-knit sweater, khakis, and boots; her hair, an unruly salt-and-pepper, had been released from the long ponytail she wore at work. It had been a frustrating evening. In the first video, a baby girl, on her back in a crib, began to cry. Was she going to be inconsolable or easily comforted? Would she hold her head up with nice muscle tone? There was no way of telling because the tape ended. In the next video, a little boy seated at a small table was invited to place bright-colored plastic rings in order of size on a plastic base. With great caution, he chose the wrong ring. The thick, bare arm of a caregiver reached across the table, snatched the ring away, and shoved the correct ring into the child's hand. He lifted it onto the base. Then he very slowly reached for another ring, also the wrong one. The caregiver grabbed the correct ring and placed it on the base herself, then added another and another, until the task was completed. End of tape. "Oh, for the love of God," Aronson said.



Jane Aronson once told prospective parents, "This isn't a shopping mart, you know."

ANA JUAN

In each video, Aronson hoped to see the child play and interact with others, so that she could look for syndromes that can afflict children who have been institutionalized. Some types of psychological damage are impossible to discern on a short video, but Aronson could observe the child's social, motor, and language skills. She also wanted to see closeups of the face, in order to rule out fetal alcohol syndrome. After viewing each tape, Aronson put on a pair of rimless eyeglasses and read the medical file that came with it. Russian medical reports tend to be filled with bizarre diagnoses, such as "pyramidal insufficiency," "neuroreflex excitability syndrome," and "seizure readiness syndrome." These terms have no Western equivalents or epidemiological foundations. Yet they cannot be dismissed entirely, since Russian doctors have seen the children and American doctors have not.

With these slivers of information, Aronson will phone prospective parents and give them her impressions, which are based as much on intuition as they are on science. For that reason, she never recommends that a family adopt or not adopt a particular child, though some of her clients press her for this guidance. Rather, she calibrates her conclusions as "average risk," "mild risk," "moderate risk," or "extreme risk." She does not have a "no risk" category.

Four years ago, Aronson's office in Mineola received a video from a prosperous Manhattan couple in their late thirties, whom I'll call Maureen and Skip Rossi. They both worked in the financial industry and were good-looking and athletic, with a close circle of friends. They'd been married for six years and had struggled with infertility for two years before turning to adoption. They registered with a West Coast agency, and in June, 1996, received a manila envelope containing a medical report, photographs, and a video of a fourteen-month-old boy living in an orphanage in Vladivostock, in the Russian Far East, near the Sea of Japan. They had hoped for a younger baby, so at first they left the envelope, sealed, on their dining-room table. "I didn't want to see a boy's face and have it in my mind and then not accept him," Maureen later explained to me. "We were educating ourselves, and knew that the longer the time in an orphanage the greater the risks," Skip added.

Two days later, they finally opened the envelope and beheld a pale, pathetic child sitting on a small chair in the middle of a room. His name was Seriozha. He had scant hair, and his forehead and scalp were stained with a blue antiseptic. The videotape of the boy was only about ninety seconds long, and "the camera was all over the place—floor, ceiling, walls," Skip said. "Some people say you look at a child and think, Oh my God, this is the child meant for me!" Maureen said. "It didn't happen that way for me. You're looking, you're thinking, Is this my child?"

He wasn't walking, Maureen recalled. "His fingers seemed to go at an angle, and he had a sad, sad face, emotionless, blank."

"He played with a toy and made a noise," Skip said. "We watched the tape often and started becoming attached." The Rossis did not show the tape or the photos to their family and friends. On the advice of a social worker, however, they telephoned Dr. Aronson.

The clinic that Aronson established at Winthrop is one of about a dozen facilities that have sprung up around the country in the last ten years to treat orphans from overseas. Typically, the clinics offer a range of services, from pre-adoption consultation and primary-care pediatrics to sub-specialty referrals for myriad health issues, which include infectious diseases, developmental delays, and—in the case of children who have been institutionalized for long periods—psychological problems. Aronson and her colleagues in this new field have petitioned the American Academy of Pediatrics to become an official section. They are part of a social experiment that is without precedent, as tens of thousands of children from institutions in foreign countries are moved into loving families.

The first large group of these children arrived from Romania between 1990 and 1994 and included a small but significant percentage of kids who were too damaged to be reclaimed simply by food, love, and security. So the pressing question for families who set out to adopt from abroad is: Can you assess the harm done to a child by life in an institution, and can you treat that child? The new adoption doctors are finding that the answer to this question can be surprising and counterintuitive.

In 1999, American families adopted a record number of children from abroad, more than sixteen thousand, from ninety-four countries; the majority of them came from Russia and China. During the last decade, the landscape of international adoption has changed as radically as that of conception and pregnancy, and for some of the same reasons: new technologies and shifting social mores have allowed prospective parents to get involved in selecting the child—a process that used to be the exclusive domain of the adoption agency and the orphanage director. Perhaps two-thirds of adoptive families still register with an agency, then wait months, or years, for a "referral"—the notice that a particular child has been assigned to them. But a growing number of families have begun to exert

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Pierre-Auguste RENOIR, *Claude Renoir in Clown Costume* (Detail), about 1909. Paris, Musée de l'Orangerie ©Photo RMN – Jean

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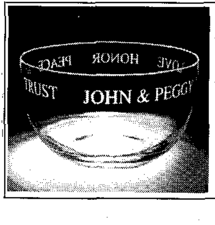

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"Totally naked except for my socks. How 'bout yourself?"

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more control over the process: they browse for photographs of children on the Internet, which now features hundreds of adoption sites; they investigate more than one child at a time; and they insist on videos and medical reports. However, the ability to shop around and the right to say no can force prospective parents to confront their deepest values. If they are told that their referral represents extreme risk, they may react like an expectant couple receiving bad news from an amniocentesis, agonizing over the consequences of rejecting the child whose video they have watched. (Agency social workers say they usually do not learn the fate of a child once a referral is declined.)

When Dr. Aronson looked at the video of Seriozha, she told me later, "I saw psychomotor retardation and the small stature typical of a depressed child." Seriozha had a "sad, withdrawn, painful look," she recalled, yet in her judgment his adoption was only a moderate risk.

"Do we get a thumbs-up here?" the Rossis asked Aronson, and she gently replied, "You know I don't operate like that."

"She felt she saw enough," Skip said. "There were concerns, there were delays, but it was basically a good referral."

After two months, Maureen said, "We chose to accept the referral, though we were afraid, knowing he had delays." In September, 1996, Seriozha was cleared for adoption, and the Rossis told everybody, "It's a boy!" Still, they withheld the pictures. "We didn't want to scare them," Skip said.

In October, 1996, Skip and Maureen met at a restaurant after work to celebrate Seriozha's eighteen-month birthday. They'd bought a book for him, and inscribed it at the table: "We longingly await your arrival. Love, Mommy and Daddy." "It was the first time we'd used those words," Skip recalled. "And then Maureen mentioned something to the waitress about a birthday, and they brought us a little cake with a candle and Maureen began to cry a bit. That's when I realized, This is real, this is our son."

About a month later, the Rossis received word that Seriozha was in the hospital. A new set of photos arrived, and they were even more alarming than the ones from the summer. "He was so frail," Skip said. "They said it was bronchitis. By now, he was part of our family. My reaction was 'My God, this is our son, he's sick, someone has to help him!' I just wanted to go get him!"

Dr. Aronson said, "Every video we received over a six-month period was more excruciating. His eyes were completely empty. I was distressed about him, tortured about him. I remember thinking, He's come this far. He's a survivor. But he looked dreadful."

"We had wanted a healthy child," Maureen said. "From the time we got the referral, there was this mixture of hope and fear: Will this child ever be normal? Will the delays follow him for years? I don't think I slept for years: from infertility to 'Is adoption of an institutionalized child the right answer?' to 'Is this the right child?' to 'O.K., but what will our quality of life be?' "

On the wall behind the desk in Aronson's new office in Manhattan is a framed sepia photograph of a group of Plains Indians on horseback. Her great-uncle, Dr. Joseph D. Aronson, was a renowned tuberculosis researcher who treated Native Americans in the nineteen-thirties. After she earned her medical degree, in 1986, Aronson worked for a time in the Navajo nation before pursuing a specialty in infectious diseases. "The first time I got involved with an adoptive family, in the early nineties, they struck me as so desperate for information," she said. "There was a kind of intimacy and creativity that came into the work. When I'm in the room with these families—all these different personalities, different stories, people feeling abandoned by the forces that be, because of infertility, and now they have a child—I'm singing inside."

During the late nineteen-nineties, Aronson made seven trips abroad, to Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, and China, and in 1997 she launched a program called Orphan Rangers, in which graduate students and health-care professionals work in overseas orphanages, in an effort to document and improve conditions. The members of the program have observed that the quality of care can vary greatly from one orphanage to another, and even from one child to another. The sunny baby with a crib near the door may get far more attention than the dour child at the far end of the room.

Aronson has also discovered that prospective parents can have very different reactions to the unsettling process of evaluating a child. Some—already in love with a photograph or a video—want a rubber stamp for their decision, and are outraged if they don't get it. "There are families who can't, or won't, listen to the risks," she told me. "There will be a very, very premature infant, and I'm busy explaining all the possible issues, and they ask, 'What kind of risk is it?' 'Well,' I'll say, 'it could be compared to jumping off the Empire State Building without a parachute.' " Some have been encouraged by their faith or by a religion-based agency to regard their referral as divinely directed. But those who consider turning down a referral are often morally stricken. A significant number of families who refuse one referral decide not to adopt at all.

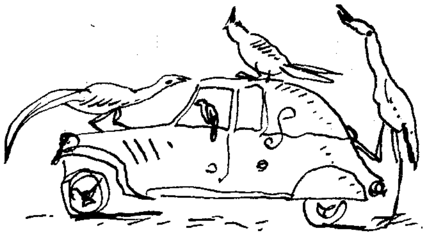
On the other hand, some prospective parents request six or eight referral videos, and send them to half a dozen adoption doctors. "I was humming along the other night," Aronson said, "watching videos, calling parents, and then I hit a couple in what I call the Bloomingdale's frame of mind. They were nitpicking. 'Did you think her ears stick out too much?' they asked me. I've had people comment on the color of a child's skin, on the slant of a child's eyes, on the shape of a baby's lips. I once said, 'This isn't a shopping mart, you know.' "

Part of Aronson's irritation arose from the fact that she herself longed for a family. "I'd be in orphanages in Russia, and I'd see a kid I was just crazy for," she told me. "I felt it physically, the pain of being face to face with children who were available and nobody else wanted them." As a young girl, she dreamed of having children. "I saw myself in a big brownstone in Manhattan, with lots of kids, being a doctor and walking my kids to school," she told me. Adults were charmed when she announced that she wanted at least three children. But, as she grew up and gradually came out as a gay woman, reactions changed. " 'Oh,' people would say, 'I didn't think you'd want that,' " she explained. "That was the reaction from gay as well as straight friends." Over time, she said, "I came to believe I wouldn't be a good parent because of how I conducted my life—it was all about perfectionism. I was afraid I would be too judgmental. I came to believe I'd be better as a professional taking care of kids—in medicine, my perfectionism was appropriate."

In December, 1996, when Seriozha was twenty months old, Maureen and Skip, in the company of five other American couples, flew to Seattle, then to Anchorage, and on to the Russian Far East. After twenty-four hours of travel, the couples landed in Vladivostock. "It was run-down, war-torn-looking, dismal," Maureen said. First, the families appeared in court to adopt the children, and then were taken to meet them.

On Christmas Day, under gray skies, the group made its way across ice and mud in the cement courtyard of a dirty brick building, and into the orphanage. There, everyone was asked to wait in a large central room. "As each child came out, I started fearing I wouldn't know what he looked like," Maureen said. "Suddenly, in walks Seriozha! Oh my God, I recognized him. I put my hand out and he took my finger, and Skip did the same. I picked him up. I was crying. After all these months, it was unbelievable. He didn't smile, showed no emotion. He had a very narrow face, almost no hair, very pale, no expression."

"He seemed unsure of us, understandably," Skip said. "He tried to go back into his room at one point; he got up, walked across the room, and walked right into a piano, kind of bounced off, and kept going." The Rossis were permitted to visit Seriozha during the next three days, and they were increasingly optimistic. "On the second day, he sat in our laps," Skip said. "There was a toy with big plastic rings—he took one off and gave it to me. He was lethargic, very tired, very sad. But on our third visit, New Year's Eve, the caregivers were all having a party and we were able to stay a long time. It was the most fun yet."



The Rossis returned to the States to wait until the adoption was finalized. It was a hopeful, happy time. They eagerly showed Jane Aronson a tape that they'd made of their visit. "She kind of put the kibosh on it," Skip said. "She brought us back to reality, pointing out how really lethargic and sad all the kids seemed."

Aronson and her colleagues understand how much is at stake when they speculate about a child's future. They rely on probabilities, then pray to be proved wrong.

Doctors know, for example, that a child tends to lose about a month of growth and development for every three months spent in an institution, but they are often delighted by how quickly adopted children catch up. Doctors also know that low birth weight, prematurity, small head circumference, eating disorders, and prenatal exposure to alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes are all risk factors for developmental disability; poor eye contact, rocking, self-injury, aggression, and hyperactivity can signal behavioral problems.

These doctors have observed cases in which a child taken from an institution fails to bond with a new family and remains hostile, even dangerous, to it. Yet many of the alarming behaviors seen in orphanage children disappear within months of adoption, or respond to therapies. "I believe so deeply in the intrinsic mysterious core of an individual," Aronson told me. "There are locked-up secrets in these children, in the core of their being. I believe there are parents who can unlock them, who relish the challenge and the opportunity."

It was a small, determined group of Americans with Romanian children who in the early nineteen-nineties forced American medicine to deal with the problems of post-institutionalized kids. In 1993, an Atlanta real-estate executive named Lois Hannon, along with her husband, adopted a three-year-old girl, Juliana, from a Romanian orphanage. Now eleven, Juliana is the Hannons' only child. She has shiny straight black hair and a pretty face, but her growth is stunted; she rocks and grimaces; she has never spoken and is not completely toilet trained. Cognitive tests put her at three years of age.

Juliana has variously been diagnosed as having "post-traumatic stress disorder, pervasive development disorder, institutional autism, brain injury," Lois Hannon told me. "She fits a lot of categories. But the bottom line is that she's a kid who spent three years in an institution." The adoption agency had assured Hannon that love and time would cure Juliana. When that turned out not to be true, Hannon and Thais Tepper, another parent of a troubled Romanian child, founded the Parent Network for the Post-Institutionalized Child, which maintains a Web site, publishes a newsletter, and sponsors regional conferences. "The Parent Network has helped us understand how complex these children are," said Dr. Patrick Mason, a pediatric endocrinologist, who in 1996 co-founded the International Adoption Evaluation Center, now located at the Marais Institute, in Atlanta. "The only reason I'm doing this work is because of Lois Hannon and Juliana."

Aronson, Mason, and their colleagues are building on a worldwide body of work that began in the nineteen-forties and nineteen-fifties with the observation of orphanage children by such pioneering researchers as René Spitz, John Bowlby, and William Goldfarb. Until then, the vast majority of babies surrendered to orphanages died in infancy. It was only with the development of better infant formulas, medical quarantine, and antibiotics that children began to grow up in institutional settings. But they did not thrive. Researchers began to document developmental delays and behavioral problems, which ultimately persuaded child-welfare authorities in both the United States and Canada to phase out large group homes and move toward foster care.

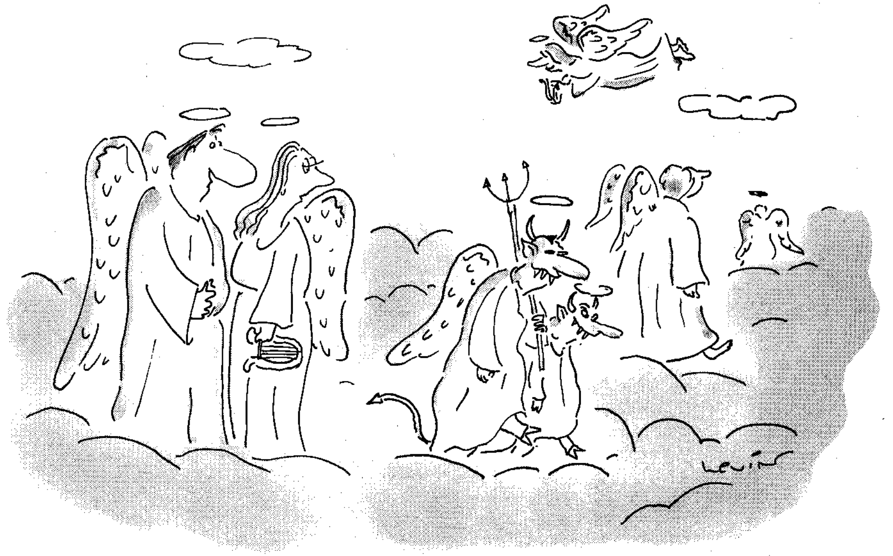
The orphans who began to arrive from the Eastern bloc presented American doctors with problems not seen in this country for many years. A few clinics that treated the children of international adoption had existed since the late nineteen-eighties; the first of these was founded by Dr. Dana Johnson, the chief of neonatology at the University of Minnesota, after he had adopted a baby from India. But these clinics dealt primarily with infectious diseases such as hepatitis and tuberculosis. The situation changed with the arrival of the children from Romania, who had experienced severe neglect and, as a result, suffered from an array of psychological and developmental problems.

"Oh, how I long for the days when you could flip someone the bird and live to tell about it."

In January of 1997, the Rossis returned to Russia to bring Seriozha home. "When we got back to the orphanage," Maureen said, "he took one look and turned around and tried to go back to the bedroom. We followed him and took him back to the central room and tried to change his clothes. He started screaming. It was very unsettling. He was frail, but also strong. We were struggling to change him—it was one of the hardest things I've ever done. We wrestled him to the floor trying to get these new clothes on him, and a girl from the agency kept interrupting with helpful remarks, and I finally turned on her and said, 'Is there something you need from me *right now*?' He screamed as we put his snowsuit on and screamed as we left the room, but quieted down at the first step out of the orphanage, and slept in the car on the way to the hotel."

The next three days in the hotel were wonderful, Maureen said. "He slept through the night, slept late. We just sat there watching him, wanting him to wake up so we could play. It was blistering cold outside, the windows frozen, no telephone, no TV, three days of bonding. He started laughing." On the ten-hour flight to Moscow, however, Seriozha was transformed. "We were supposed to give him a lollipop for takeoff," Maureen said. "As we accelerated, I took it away from him to give him a new one, and he freaked out. He threw a forty-five-minute, bloodcurdling, screaming tantrum. He was like a terrified wild animal, arching his back, banging his head on the ground, biting his fingers. Onlookers were horrified. People kept trying to talk to him in Russian, making him scream louder. They tried to tell us what to do, in Russian. We had him strapped into the seat. They said, 'Unstrap him!' so we unstrapped him, but he was hurting himself. The agency staff person on the plane said, 'There must be a pin in his clothing sticking him! I've never seen anything like this!' He finally calmed down, but we couldn't relax, couldn't sleep for ten hours."

"Our social worker had given us so



"It's part of His new diversity program."

much literature, so many scary stories, while saying ninety per cent of the adoptions didn't turn out like that," Skip said. "Suddenly, we're thinking, Our worst fears have come true. We're in the ten per cent."

They spent the night in Moscow in despair. "Two of the American couples had children at home," Skip said, "and we'd all been looking to them for advice. One of the hardest things was seeing how taken aback they were by Seriozha's behavior. They tried to be nice, but we could see they felt sorry for us." At 3 A.M., exhausted, the Rossis decided to phone Aronson in New York.

"She was very systematic, very matter-of-fact, which calmed us down," Skip said. " 'Take a breath, let's go through this: Does he have a fever? Is his nose running? Is he eating?' She was so calm and unafraid. She said, 'Here's the plan: As long as you're travelling, he rules. When you get home, you'll make things right.' So we said, 'O.K. He rules.' "

"The next morning, we let him carry a pepper shaker out of the restaurant," Maureen said. "One of the Americans said to us, 'Are you crazy?' But we were too afraid to try to pry it away from him. I did a little dance with him in the lobby, leaning this way and that way, trying to empty the pepper before he got it into his eyes."

On the three-hour flight from Moscow to Copenhagen, Seriozha was calm, but the moment the Rossis entered their hotel room something set him off again. "We couldn't leave our room," Skip said. "We called Dr. Jane again, from Copenhagen. She was very calm and took us through the list again. 'Is he hurting you? No? Good. Don't let him hurt himself.' It comforted us just to hear her voice.

"The next day, we had to get on a ten-hour flight to Newark," Skip went on. "We were petrified." An hour and a half away from Newark, Seriozha had another tantrum. "We crawled into a little alcove at the back of the plane," Maureen said, "and he was screaming and flailing. Skip pinned his arms and legs, and then he bit Skip."

"The look in his eyes was absolute terror," Skip said. But, he added, "I never said to myself on that trip, 'We made a mistake.' I came close to thinking it, but I never got there. At that point, we were trusting in God that we were trying to do a good thing, that we were doing the right thing."

When the Rossis arrived in Newark, a welcoming committee of family and friends was there, but they wouldn't let anyone get near Seriozha for long. "That was a Sunday night," Skip said. "On Monday morning, we had him in Jane Aronson's office." Seriozha threw a kicking, screaming, head-banging tantrum in Aronson's office. His parents were thrilled. "Now someone knew, there was someone we could talk to," Maureen said. "We couldn't tell our families about it—we were afraid they'd be too scared, or that they wouldn't accept him."

Aronson's advice was to let Seriozha vent his rage in a place where he couldn't get hurt. The Rossis built a "tantrum corner" by placing a sofa diagonally across one corner of the living room and padding the triangle behind it with a hundred dollars' worth of eggshell foam. "Dr. Jane wasn't panicked at all by Seri," Maureen said, but Aronson now admits that she was thinking, They don't realize how delayed this child is.

Aronson and her colleagues have concluded that orphanage children can recover from their behavioral and emotional problems, but evaluation and treatment must begin immediately. Dr. Ronald Federici, a developmental neuropsychologist in Washington, D.C., has become one of the acknowledged authorities on what he calls "detoxification from institutionalization." He is a fast-talking, jaunty man who has adopted six older children from Russian and Romanian orphanages. "The adoption agencies tell couples, 'Just give the child a lot of love, and give it time,' " Federici said to me. "Well, love is one of the worst interventions for a kid who doesn't know how to process it. And time? I'll have parents come in and say, 'We've been struggling with him for three years. We're about to disrupt the adoption.' And I say, 'Three years! Where have you been? I've been here.' "

Federici has written a book, "Help for the Hopeless Child," in which he lays out a twenty-step program for bringing a child home from an orphanage. "It is very important for families to absolutely and unequivocally not overstimulate the child," he writes. "Your child's room should be relatively stripped of stimulation, colors, sights, sound, toys and, primarily, food. Remember, even though this seems cruel to you and me, it is all the child knows and it is what feels familiar. . . . Do not take the child to department stores, shopping centers, grocery stores or, worst of all, amusement parks such as Disney World, where children can become completely disorganized and out of control." Children who have suffered profound neglect or abuse may need to be taught step by step how to feel emotion, how to use language, and how to move around. Adoption doctors have begun to adapt rehabilitation techniques practiced on stroke victims, brain-injured patients, abused children, learning-disabled children, and Vietnam vets suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, and to apply these treatments to orphanage children.

With Aronson's guidance, the Rossis had Seriozha evaluated immediately, and the news was not good. "He was twenty-one months old and tested at a twelve- to sixteen-month level for gross motor skills, fine motor skills, and language," Maureen said. "It was a scary time. We'd go to friends' houses and watch their kids do things he couldn't do. At the playground, he was afraid of the equipment, afraid of the other children. Skip and I had had an active social life. Now we were thinking, Seriozha is our life. We won't see much of our friends anymore."

The Rossis investigated special-education programs. At one school, Maureen saw a grim classroom with severely disabled children. "This was definitely *not* where he belonged," she said. "I grabbed Seri and ran out of there and took a taxi to the Manhattan Center for Early Learning." The Center for Early Learning, on the East Side, is a state-funded school for special-needs children. For a year and a half, Seriozha—sometimes with his mother, sometimes with a nanny or his grandfather—attended nursery-school-type classes designed to enhance his physical, social, and language skills. "It was nothing clinical or complex," Maureen said. "It was a colorful, happy, musical place. He loved it. With occupational therapy, he played with Lincoln Logs and Legos, and fished little fishes out of a basket. He'd have half an hour of individual speech therapy, half an hour of group speech. The muscles of his mouth were underdeveloped, so he was given a straw that, when he blew through it, made a little animal move along the length. He worked so hard to overcome what he couldn't do. He developed so quickly. He grew, and his hair grew in, and he started to speak English. It all happened so fast."

"It didn't happen that fast," Aronson said the next time I spoke with her. "This was a very delayed child. What happened fast were the changes in them. They, as Seriozha's parents, grew very quickly. They were totally invested in this kid. They did not obsess about his delays or past life. They took joy in his daily progress.

"Over six months, nine months, twelve months, Seriozha made a slow but secure attachment to his family," Aronson went on. "It took maybe two years for him to come out of his shell. Recently, the family came to my office. He waltzed in like any other four-year-old, completely relaxed, like 'I own the world.' 'So, Seri, how's school?' I asked him. 'How's life?' We talked, and his eye contact was unrelenting. He's incredibly gifted, by the way. I spent a few years being frightened about this kid. But his parents fell in love with this child. I think they saw who he was."

Most of the babies Aronson treats are healthy and well developed. But some of the older children who have grown up in orphanages face severe challenges. "I'm in pain about the kids who somehow are not going to go beyond a certain plateau," she said. "I do my best to work with these families, to help them find the best resources. A fantastic mother came in recently. At two and a half, her son is not making the kind of progress we hoped for. He has serious expressive-language delays, he's obsessed with little cars, trains, zippers. He's been diagnosed as having pervasive developmental disorder. But he's a tender, sweet boy. I had him seen by a pediatric neurologist, who has strategies. I'm not all doom and gloom with these families; it's not 'This is the label and that's the end of it.'"

A short time ago, the Rossis moved into a Colonial house in Connecticut, where I visited them recently. When Seriozha got up from his nap and came shyly, in stocking feet, into the den, he rubbed his eyes unhappily and clung to his mother at the sight of a stranger. But as he woke up, and had juice and a snack, he sat beside me on the sofa, ready to chat. He has alabaster skin, wavy blond hair, deep-set dark-blue eyes, an upturned nose, and a sweet giggle laugh. With the referral photos in hand, I could not have picked this child out of a lineup.

"Do you know Dr. Jane?" I asked Seriozha.

"Yeah," he said mournfully. "First time I ever met her, she took a shot at me."

"You remember that?" I asked. "No," he said, and then, as an afterthought, "fortunately."

The Rossis had adopted another child, a girl, who also came from an orphanage in the Russian Far East. Six weeks earlier, Alexandra, aged nine months, had arrived. Now Seriozha turned to his sister, who was in a walker, and said, "You're just a little whippersnapper, Alexandra—right, Mommy?"

Alexandra's adoption had proceeded without any delays or dramas or doubts. "Now that I see how smoothly it can all go, I feel terrible about what I must have said to people who called me for advice after we adopted Seriozha," Skip said. "Who knows how many people I scared off?"

But for Aronson families like the Rossis have been an inspiration. In February, she began the process of adopting a baby boy. "I think I was working over many years toward becoming the person who could be a good parent," she said. "All my families have been my teachers. I've watched them grow into their roles, and I'm with them all the way. And now I have a person in my life who wants what I want—a big family, three children minimum." Her partner, Diana Leo, is the director of development at New York Law School. "She has helped me have the family I have dreamed of all my life," Aronson said.

For the past six years, Aronson has been the medical consultant for Spence-Chapin, a New York-based adoption agency. When she called the agency to say that she wanted to start her own adoption, the director of international adoptions said, "Jane, we've all been waiting for this." Aronson chose to adopt from Vietnam, because, she said, "I had such strong feelings about the war as a kid. I was intoxicated with the history of the country." Waiting for a referral gave her a deeper understanding of what her patients go through. "I felt scared, anxious, terrified some days," she said. "I asked myself the same questions my patients ask me: Will I be a good parent? Will the child be cute? Will the child be happy?" In June, Aronson was notified that, at the end "of the summer, she will probably be travelling to pick up Ben, who was born in April. "I am delirious," she told me. "I simply fell in love at the sound of his name. And when I saw him I was totally gone. I completely forgot to ask about his measurements or head circumference."

One day, when I visited Aronson at her office, a package arrived from Chicago. In it were a photograph of a Chinese baby girl and a medical report. Aronson studied them, and then got the adoption-agency caseworker on the speakerphone.

"Susan? Dr. Aronson."

"Dr. Aronson! Thank you for calling! Did you get it? We don't think this baby is normal, so I didn't call the family."

"What's the problem?"

"The tongue," the caseworker said. "Did you see the tongue?" In a small, square, color photograph, a tiny head was squinting and yawning, and the tongue looked short and blunt, malformed.

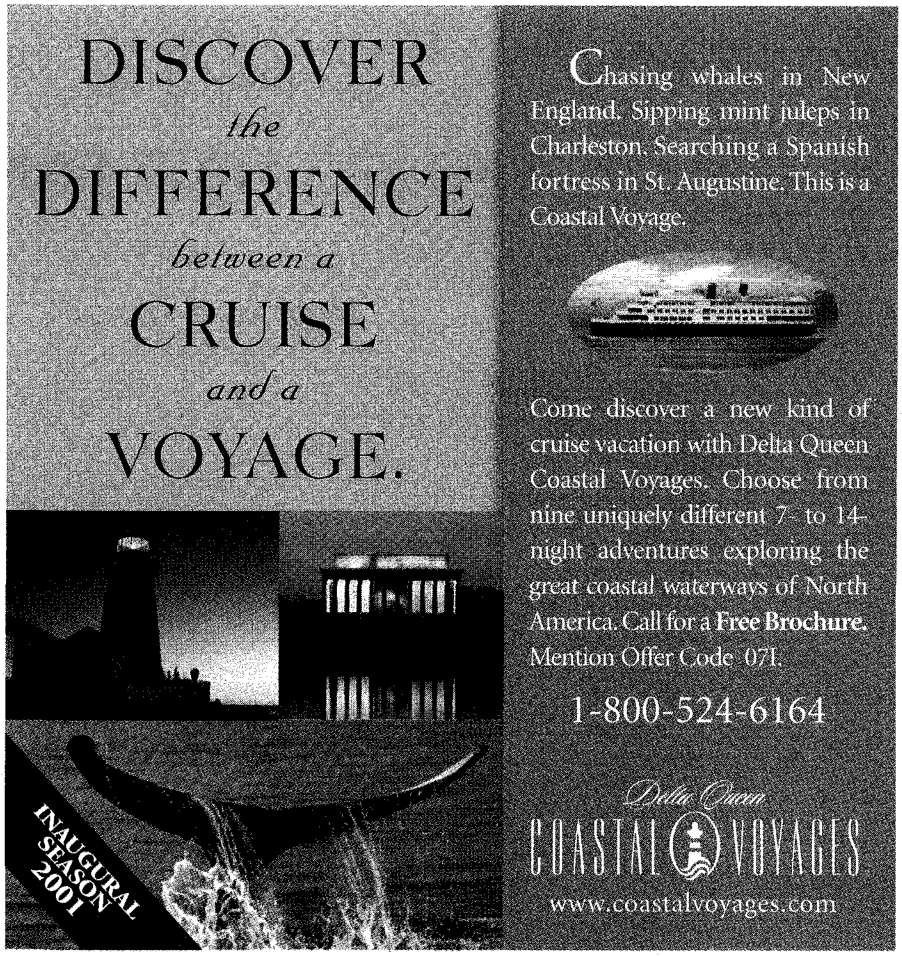
"I don't see that this baby is different from many others we see."

"But did you see the tongue?"

"I'll tell you what I see, Susan: I see a moment in time. I see a baby who has just woken up from a nap. I'm not scared by this picture. The science of it isn't there."

"You're saying she's all right?"

Jane Aronson was thinking that the baby's height, weight, and head circumference at the time of admission to the orphanage and at her last exam were normal, that she'd been full term at birth, that she was Chinese and therefore not likely to suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome. Of course, she didn't know anything about the child's genetic history or about the birth mother's prenatal care and exposure to infectious diseases. But, even if the baby were lying on a table in front of her, there was a limit to the predictions science could make about human personality, and about human resilience. "Get a better picture of this baby," Jane Aronson told the caseworker, "and let's save a life." ♦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A REPORTER AT LARGE

HITLER'S LOST FAMILY

What became of the Führer's relatives? The closest live in the suburbs of New York.

TIMOTHY W. RYBACK

From my apartment in Salzburg, it is a pleasant twenty-minute drive along the Berchtesgadener Landstrasse, past the villages of Grödig and St. Leonhard, across the border into Bavaria to the outskirts of Berchtesgaden, then up a series of hairpin turns to the Obersalzberg, where Adolf Hitler passed, as he once said, "*die schönsten Zeiten meines Lebens*"—the most beautiful times of his life.

The Berghof, a rambling, three-story structure with balconies, picture windows, and intersecting pitched roofs, was dynamited and bulldozed by the Germans in the early fifties, on American instructions, in a futile attempt to prevent it from becoming a place of pilgrimage for former Nazis. Only shattered walls remain, and, beneath the ground, Hitler's bunker, linked to a network of tunnels. In the spring and summer, elm and beech trees mingle with firs, creating a leafy dome that lends the space a protected air. The trees are scored with Nordic runes and twin S.S. lightning bolts; the general effect is of jittery mixed metaphors—Richard Wagner meets the Blair Witch.

In Hitler's day, Neville Chamberlain was here, as were Mussolini, King Boris of Bulgaria, the Duke of Windsor and his American wife, Wallis Simpson. Mostly, though, the Führer reserved the Berghof for intimates and immediate family. When Hitler was taken with a severe flu, his sister Paula spent two weeks there nursing him back to health; his half sister Angela served as housekeeper for nearly eight years. William Patrick Hitler, the son of Hitler's half brother Alois, visited his Uncle Adolf at the Berghof in 1936. "I drove there with friends and was shown into the garden," William told the American magazine *Look* in 1939. "Hitler was entertaining some very beautiful women at tea. When he saw us, he strode up, slashing a whip as he walked and taking the tops off the flowers."

Today, nothing of Hitler's remains among the Berghof ruins. "In April of 1945, when the S.S. abandoned the Obersalzberg, the residents of Berchtesgaden and Dürrnberg came with wagons and horses and basically took everything they could carry," Florian Beierl, of the Obersalzberg Historical Archive, told me. "On May 4th, the Americans and French arrived and cleared out the rest. There is film footage of two American senators, Ernest McFarland and Burton Wheeler, walking out of the Berghof ruins with books from Hitler's study under their arms." Beierl, whose archive houses Germany's most extensive collection of primary-source material on the Berghof, says that since then almost everything plundered by local residents has found its way into American hands, including Hitler's bedside telephone, six volumes of his Shakespeare collection, bound in leather with a swastika and the initials A.H. on the spine, and some snippets saved by a barber who once trimmed the Führer's hair. "The only things still in Berchtesgaden are some rugs, furniture, door handles, and part of the Berghof patio, which someone now has in his back yard," says Beierl.

Last autumn, the Salzburg photographer Herman Seidl told me that Paula Hitler, Adolf Hitler's only full-blood sibling, was thought to be buried in Schönau am Königsee. On a blustery November day, I visited the Schönau cemetery, and after assuring the groundskeeper that I intended neither to dese-

ABOVE: AKG; OPPOSITE: GLOBE PHOTOS

Opposite: Hitler, Eva Braun, center, and the Goebbels family, at the Berghof. William Patrick Hitler, above, in New York, 1939.

crate nor to commemorate I was led to a well-tended plot among a hillside of headstones. A plain oak cross, fitted with a metal box in which I saw the traces of a spent votive candle, bore the inscription "PAULA HITLER—1896-1960."

"Paula was brought from Vienna to Berchtesgaden in the final weeks of the war to be with her brother," Florian Beierl told me. "After Hitler committed suicide in Berlin, Paula stayed in Berchtesgaden. She lived in a small two-room apartment near the train station under the name Frau Wolf, but everyone in town knew she was Adolf Hitler's sister." Beierl calls her Berchtesgaden's "public secret."

In late May, 1945, George Allen, a United States Army Intelligence officer, met Frau Wolf. She refused to submit to an interrogation, insisting that it was late in the day and she needed to get to the bakery. Allen promised her a loaf of bread, then drove her to Berchtesgaden.

During the questioning, Paula talked about her brother's eating habits ("Even in his youth, he never cared much for meat"), about Eva Braun ("I met her once"), about his Catholic upbringing ("I don't think my brother Adolf ever formally left the Church"), and repeatedly about their mother, who had died of breast cancer in 1907, when Paula was eleven and Adolf was eighteen. "The death of our mother made a deep impression on me and Adolf," Paula said. "We were very attached to our mother." Allen got the impression of "a lower-middle-class woman of great religion but no intelligence whose misfortune it was to be related to a famous person with whom she had nothing in common." Sensing her fragile emotional state—Paula repeatedly broke into tears—Allen's interpreter concluded the interview, noting, "It is clear that you have been deeply affected by your brother's fate."

"By his personal fate, of course," she replied. "Please remember, he was my brother."

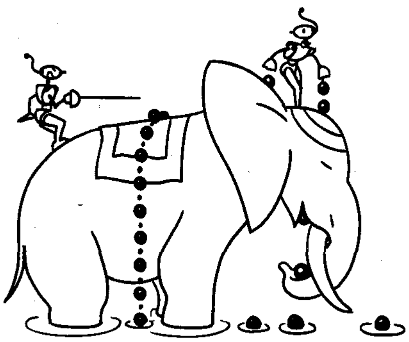
"I have absolutely no sense of family history," Hitler announced during one of his "table talks"—long-winded after-dinner monologues. "These things are not in my nature. I belong only to my people."

As it happened, a generation of historians seemed to agree. In the eight hundred pages of Ian Kershaw's recent, highly praised Hitler biography, only passing reference is made to his siblings. The same is true in the work of Alan Bullock, John Toland, Joachim Fest, and scores of others. In the first volume of "Mein Kampf," which is devoted to Hitler's early life, there is not a single mention of Paula, or of his two half siblings Angela and Alois. "Historians have been rewriting the same ten Hitler biographies for the last fifty years," one Hitler relative told me recently. "You read almost nothing about the family. It is as though we did not even exist."

They do exist, though, especially in the Waldviertel, a remote region of Austria near the Czech border. Here dozens of people are related to Hitler. After the Anschluss, in 1938, the Waldviertel declared itself the "*Ahnengau des Führers*"—the Führer's ancestral province. The town of Döllersheim renamed its principal square Alois Hitler Platz, after the Führer's father. In Spital, villagers decorated the birthplace of Hitler's mother with wreaths and swastikas. For centuries, the indigenous families—the Schicklgrubers, the Koppensteiners, the Pölzls, the Schmidts, the Schmieds, the Hiedlers, the Huettlers, and the Hytlers (Hitler derives from the German word for "smallholder")—have worked the fields and intermarried, thinning the soil and thickening the blood. The Austrian writer Karl-Markus Gauss calls the Waldviertel "the Appalachia of Austria."

Most of Hitler's grandnieces and grandnephews—the grandchildren of Hitler's half sister Angela—live in Linz, an industrial city on the western edge of the Waldviertel, close to where Hitler's parents are buried. Then there are the grandchildren of Hitler's half brother Alois, the only descendants of the paternal line of Hitlers. They are Americans, and live on Long Island, not far from Manhattan.

Unlike Stalin's daughter, Svetlana Alliluyeva, who passed many of her latter years on lecture tours in America and England, or Mussolini's grandchildren, who lead very public lives, the Hitler relatives keep a low profile. In Austria, they often respond to inquiries with a curt denial of their ancestry; sometimes they refuse comment or slam down the phone. In America, through a family lawyer, they have refused repeated requests for an interview. All of them may fear *Sippenhaft*—punishment for the crimes of one's blood relations.



Admittedly, postwar life has not been easy for some of the relatives. In the summer of 1945, Alois was arrested for travelling with forged documents under the name Eberle and turned over to the British authorities; a subsequent report noted that Alois was "absolutely scared stiff of being associated in any way with the former Führer's activities." Alois eventually changed his name, but by 1953 he was reportedly earning pocket money by signing photographs of his half brother and selling them to tourists.

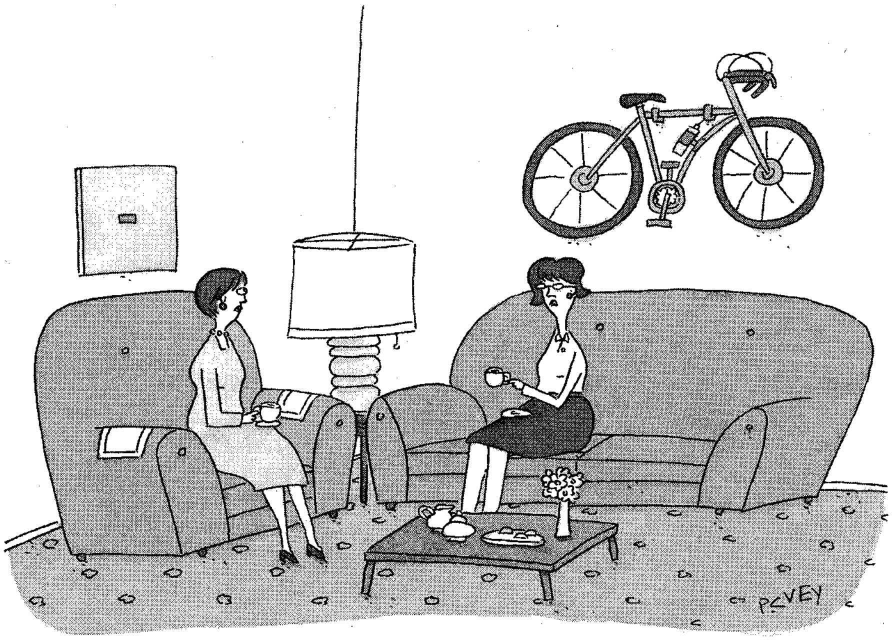
In May of 1945, Johann Schmidt, a first cousin—he is the son of Hitler's mother's sister—was arrested by Red Army soldiers and taken to Vienna for questioning. He died in custody. In June, his son, Johann, Jr., was taken to Moscow and imprisoned, along with several other relatives. Charged with "coöperating with the Führer," they were sentenced to twenty-five years in prison. Schmidt, who was released under a general amnesty in 1955, was one of a handful of Hitler relatives to survive Russian internment. "The postwar period has ripped much larger gaps in my family than anyone could have foreseen," Paula Hitler wrote the publisher Hans Sündermann, a close friend, in December of 1955. "My nephew has returned home from Russia and with him a young Waldviertel relative, and seven people have legally returned." Five other Hitler relatives, Paula noted, had perished. "The same fate as hundreds of thousands of others," she wrote. "My brother would have found it fitting that we were also not spared."

Arranging an interview with a Hitler relative often requires circuitous arrangements and questionable intermediaries. One afternoon last winter, I received a phone call from a contact—an antique dealer who is a major purveyor of Hitler relics—telling me to take a train from Salzburg to Munich. On arriving in Munich, I called a cellular phone and was instructed to take the U4 subway to Odeonsplatz and wait in front of the Café Tambosi. After forty-five minutes, a Ford station wagon carrying a three-and-a-half-foot bronze nude of Eva Braun arrived, and transported me across town to a smoky café that had served as an early headquarters for the Nazi Party; three doors down was the Osteria Italiana, formerly the Osteria Bavaria, a quaint wood-panelled establishment that had served as Hitler's *Stammrestaurant* in the nineteen-thirties.

The Hitler relative, a man in his late fifties with a severe, tense face and a receding hairline, had just come from work. As we sat down, he asked the waiter for a cigarette, then informed me that he was giving up smoking and had stopped buying them for himself. For the next two hours, he got two more cigarettes from the waiter, three from the bartender, and several more from neighboring tables as I listened to tales of Jewish conspiracies, laments for lapsed German nationalism, and quaint personal anecdotes about Hitler—his love of children, his modest life style, his chivalrous treatment of women, and the abuse he has suffered at the hands of contemporary historians. "At some point in the next hundred years, the Germans will build a monument to Adolf Hitler just as the French have for Napoleon," he told me, drawing on his cigarette and glancing furtively about. "By then, I hope there will finally be an honest biography acknowledging everything he did for us."

He then turned to an issue that has interested many of Hitler's relatives: their possible claim to assets—mostly royalties from the sale of "Mein Kampf"—that were confiscated by the Bavarian state after the war. According to Werner Maser, who represents family interests, the original sum was almost nine million marks—perhaps as much as twenty-two million dollars today. There were other assets as well, such as thirty albums of photographs that belonged to Eva Braun, which are in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. "Keep in mind that they were married, and that this marriage was recognized under German civil law, which means their estate has to be treated as a whole," the relative observed. My contact the Hitler-relic dealer estimated that each photo album could sell on the open market for five thousand dollars—as much as two hundred thousand dollars all told.

When I asked Hitler's relative if he had any moral reservations about attempting to reclaim either money or artifacts from the "estate," he flicked his cigarette and said, "I have absolutely no moral reservations. The Jews have gotten their compensation, and now the slave laborers have gotten theirs. It is time for us to get ours." His only concern was that he had a number of important business associates who were Jewish, and who believed he had Jewish blood in his family. "I tell them that I have an uncle living in Tel Aviv," he said. "Now, if it came out that I was reclaiming part of the Hitler estate, that might look a little strange to them, don't you think?"



"Howard's gone on the Tour de France without his bicycle again."

• •

For two decades, Werner Maser has served as the administrator of the purported Hitler estate—he uses the term *Verwalter des Hitler Nachlasses*—claiming to represent Hitler family interests in property claims against the Bavarian state. During the past forty years, Maser, who is seventy-eight, has walked a thin line between academic respectability and the demimonde of former Nazis. He has written more than twenty books and has interviewed virtually every surviving Hitler associate—including Leni Riefenstahl and Albert Speer—and many of the children of prominent Nazis, among them the offspring of Hermann Goering, the Luftwaffe chief; Heinrich Himmler, the head of the S.S.; and Martin Bormann, Hitler's secretary. "He has a lot of questionable contacts," says Gerhard Weinberg, a professor emeritus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and an important figure in Nazi-era scholarship. The historian Joachim Fest grudgingly cites Maser's research in his Hitler biography. Conceding that Maser has uncovered some interesting material that might otherwise never have come to light, one German scholar calls Maser an "academic bloodhound."

Werner Maser's house, just outside Speyer, is covered in ivy grafted from the graves of Hitler's parents. Inside, it is filled with art work, including a Hans List landscape from Hitler's private collection. When I visited, Maser was reviewing page proofs for a forthcoming biography of Goering, which, he claims, will contain previously unpublished material from the private archives of the Goering family, among others. Maser

Hitler with his niece Geli Raubal in Bavaria, 1929. Two years later, she committed suicide in his Munich apartment.

SÜDDEUTSCHER VERLAG

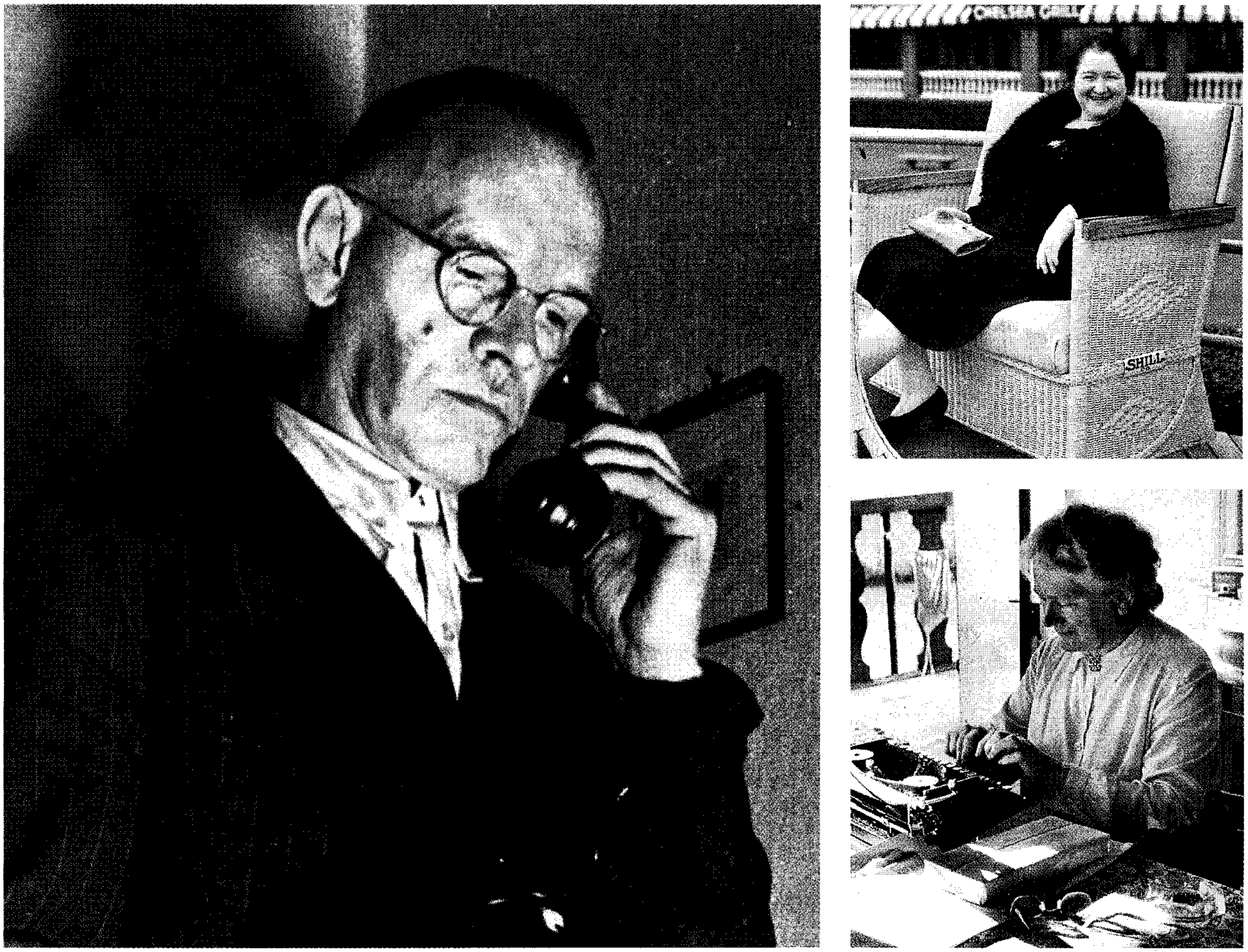
wears cardigans and slippers and pats one warmly on the shoulder, but his cautious blue eyes simultaneously welcome and gauge.

"It will be a sensation," Maser told me, showing me a letter he attributed to Albert Speer, in which Speer talks about supplying materials for Auschwitz. "At Nuremberg, he claimed he knew nothing of Auschwitz!" Maser said, shaking the piece of paper. "And here it is in black and white. He lied and got away with it!"

In the late seventies, Maser made headlines when he "discovered," in a small town in northern France, Jean-Marie Loret, Hitler's putative illegitimate son, born to a Frenchwoman during the First World War. Maser provided documentation that allegedly proved paternity, and instigated a series of extensive genetic tests at the University of Heidelberg. (The tests were inconclusive.) Maser also accompanied Loret on a world tour that took them as far as Japan, where Loret greeted the National Assembly with a Nazi salute. "When I took him to Dachau, he was completely unmoved," Maser recalled of Loret, who died in 1985. "He crossed his arms like this"—Maser bolted his arms across his chest—"looked around him and said, 'If my father did this, then he must have had his reasons.' " Maser paused, then added, "He was a horrible person."

Maser began his association with the extended Hitler family in the mid-sixties, following publication of a history of "Mein Kampf," which was serialized in *Der Spiegel.* (The issue of the magazine was briefly confiscated by German authorities.) At the time, Anton Schmidt, a Hitler relative, wrote to Maser asking for help in determining the book's copyright status. Maser told Schmidt there was a good chance that the family could win back the "Mein Kampf" copyright and lay claim to future royalties. Schmidt subsequently held a meeting of five or six Waldviertel relatives, and met privately with Leo Raubal, the son of Angela Raubal, Hitler's half sister. "Most of the Hitler heirs were poor, uneducated farmers," Maser told me. "Leo was the intellectual among them. He had a degree in chemistry and was working as a director at the Linz Steel Works, part of the former Hermann Goering Werke." Leo, who had been Hitler's favorite nephew, was to emerge as the family spokesman.

According to Maser, the nephew so closely resembled his uncle that in the thirties he occasionally served as a Hitler double, waving to the crowds that gathered near the Berghof. In January of 1943, when the Russians captured Leo at the Battle of Stalingrad, Hitler offered to swap him for Stalin's son, Yasha, who had been taken prisoner by the Germans outside Leningrad. In a letter, Stalin's daughter, Svetlana Alliluyeva, recalls that her father rejected the proposal with a curt "*Nyet, na voine, kak na*



Alois Hitler, Adolf's half brother, and, top right, his first wife, Brigid. Paula Hitler, Adolf's only full sibling, writing her memoirs.

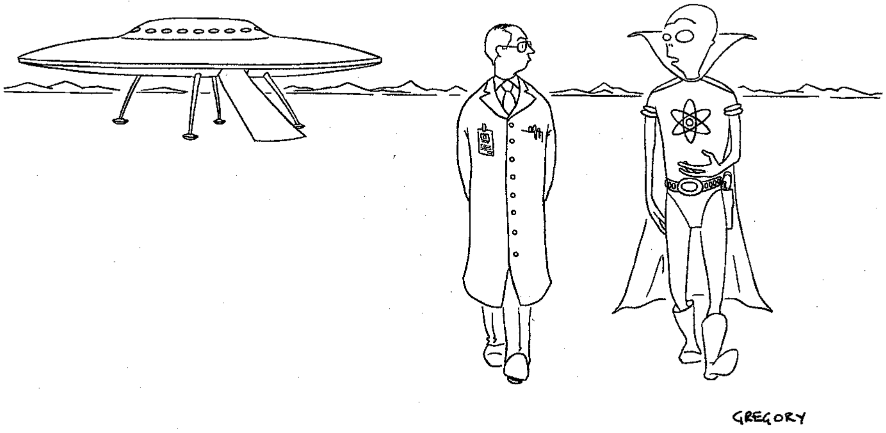
LEFT: CORBIS-BETTMANN; RIGHT TOP: CULVER PICTURES; RIGHT BOTTOM: ARCHIVE PHOTOS

voine"—war is war. Hitler had Yasha summarily executed; Leo miraculously returned from Russian captivity in the mid-fifties, and settled into an almost invisible existence in Linz.

Maser first met Leo in a hotel in Linz, in 1967. "He was a very pleasant man, but I could tell right away that he wanted to keep a certain distance," Maser told me. The two spoke for several hours about the Hitler family—at the time, Maser was at work on his biography "Hitler: Legend, Myth, Reality"—and also about the legal status of "Mein Kampf." After the meeting, Leo wrote to Maser, saying, "You brought to my attention the circumstances that the finance office of the Bavarian State has in its possession approximately eight million marks from the royalties for 'Mein Kampf,' " and mentioned another lawyer who might help with his claim. Maser showed me the letter. It had been stored in his basement for years, and mice had gnawed into several paragraphs, but the key passages were still legible.

Maser soon found himself serving as family arbiter, shuttling between Leo Raubal, in Linz, and the Schmidts, other relatives, in Spital, a poor farming village in the western end of the Waldviertel. For several years in the late sixties and early seventies, Maser attempted to cobble together an arrangement that would satisfy the various factions within the family. At first, Raubal thought that he could win back the confiscated "Mein Kampf" royalties. As a precondition, Maser says, he insisted that the family claim only those royalties that were generated between 1925, when the book first appeared, and 1936. After that, "Mein Kampf" replaced the Bible as the official wedding gift presented to German couples. "Since these were forced sales, and the money came from public sources, I insisted that all these royalties be donated to orphanages or Holocaust survivors," Maser says. Whether it would have been possible to divide the money with such precision is doubtful, but in any case the question was moot because the relatives could not agree on who would get what. Leo Raubal added a complication by insisting that the entire amount be paid to him, and that he would disperse the money based on lineage. "Raubal wanted fifty per cent for himself," Maser told me. "But I protested, saying that he could not justify that to the rest of the family." The Schmidts themselves did not complain. Maser recalls one of them saying, "*Als Hitler lebte, bekamen wir nichts; nun dass er tot ist, bekommen wir erst recht nichts*"—"While Hitler lived, we got nothing; now that he's dead, we'll certainly get nothing."

When Leo Raubal died of a heart attack in 1979 while vacationing in Spain, Anton Schmidt emerged as the driving force in reclaiming the "Mein Kampf" royalties, even though there were several relatives with closer genealogical links. After Raubal's death, Jean-Marie



"Our civilization is thousands of years more advanced than yours, but still sort of kitschy."

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Loret briefly asserted his right to Raubal's fifty per cent, and was warmly received by the Waldviertel clan. "Anton Schmidt gave him a big hug," Maser recalls. "He said, 'You're the son, after all.'" Raubal's sister Elfriede Hochegger, who was married to a German lawyer, once stated that she had no intention of making any claims.

Maser's unprecedented access is due in good part to his discretion. He categorically refuses to facilitate any contact with Hitler relatives, and protects their identity and privacy absolutely. He seems, though, to have abandoned any hope of finding common cause among them. "They are extremely independent, thickheaded, and confident," he told me. "With Hitler, it was also impossible to reach consensus. They are exactly like him."

Even if Maser rallied the Hitler clan, he would still have to deal with Siegfried Zängl and Nicole Lang, who oversee the copyright to "Mein Kampf" for Bavaria's Finance Ministry—which mostly comes down to keeping the book off the market. In their suite of offices in a handsome palace on Munich's Odeonsplatz, Zängl told me that under a 1948 Confiscation Order, tied to the 1946 Allied Control Directive No. 38, all assets of high-ranking Nazis were confiscated and given to the state. "There is absolutely no legal basis on which the Hitler heirs could lay claim to the royalties," Zängl said.

"Nor on the copyright of 'Mein Kampf,'" Lang added.

Zängl, a lawyer in his sixties, has decades of experience, including fifteen years of overseeing Bavaria's Holocaust-compensation payments to Israel. Lang, a stylish blonde in her mid-twenties, searches the Web and the news services for copyright infractions. "It is our responsibility to see that this book stays out of print," Zängl said. The only exceptions, Lang added, are the American and British editions—published by Houghton Mifflin and Pimlico (an imprint of Random House U.K.), respectively—for which Eher Verlag, the Nazi Party's publisher, sold the copyright in 1933. There is also a recent Hebrew translation. "We did this because we felt it was appropriate for scholarly use in Israel," Zängl said.

When I visited Zängl and Lang last autumn, they were savoring a Swedish Supreme Court decision to block a Stockholm publisher's translation of "Mein Kampf," and had persuaded Barnes&Noble.com and Amazon.com to stop shipment of English-language translations of the book to Germany. But Lang conceded that there are already as many as forty illegal translations of "Mein Kampf" on the market. Last month, a Czech publisher printed more than ten thousand copies of a Czech translation of "Mein Kampf" before police intervened. There is also a facsimile of the 1934 German edition that can be downloaded from a white-supremacist site on the Web.

Noting that, except for the copyright of "Mein Kampf" and possibly a few personal objects, the Hitler assets were sold off decades ago, Zängl concluded, "I don't understand what legal basis Professor Maser has for calling himself the administrator of the Hitler estate. Even if he is the administrator, there is no Hitler estate to administer."

Cordula Schacht, the daughter of Hitler's finance minister and the current administrator of the Joseph Goebbels estate, challenges Zängl's assertions. "In his will, Hitler said the Nazi Party was to be his heir," Schacht told me, "and if the Party ceased to exist then the German Reich, and if the Reich ceased to exist then he didn't need to make any further provisions because everything was kaput anyway." In a legal battle, Schacht says, the real question would be: Who has the right to the Hitler bequest—the Free State of Bavaria or Hitler's heirs?

Previous court decisions regarding the will Hitler dictated in his Berlin bunker in 1945 only complicate the matter. Paula Hitler first sought to claim an inheritance in 1948, after which a Munich court declared Hitler's will "*nichtig*" ("void"), citing "formal legal deficiencies." Six years later, however, in a court case involving the publication of Hitler's "table talk," a Düsseldorf court ruled that Hitler's will "had to be respected to the letter."

Werner Maser notes that in 1962 three Hitler relatives, not the Bavarian government, received royalties—a total of fifteen hundred Deutsche marks—for the publication of Hitler's "Zweites Buch" ("The Second Book"), a typewritten manuscript that Hitler had intended as a sequel to "Mein Kampf." Maser insists that this payment effectively confirmed the legitimacy of the Hitler heirs to both the Hitler estate and the royalties generated by "Mein Kampf." Gerhard Weinberg, the Chapel Hill scholar who discovered and saw to the publishing of the manuscript, concedes that royalties were paid to the family to avoid legal complications, but also makes a distinction between the royalties from "Mein Kampf" and those from the "Zweites Buch." "In the case of 'Mein Kampf,' the book had already been published, which meant that the copyright could be confiscated," Weinberg told me recently. "But since the 'Zweites Buch' had never been published, the copyright had not been acted on, and thus could not be confiscated. The law makes a very clear distinction here."

Today, the only people drawing royalties from "Mein Kampf" are Pimlico, in London, which sends the proceeds to the Curtis Brown agency (in 1933, the agency negotiated a deal with Hitler's publisher for the copyright on the British and Commonwealth editions); and Houghton Mifflin, which bought the North American rights in 1979 (from the U. S. Department of Justice, which had controlled them since the war). Jonathan Lloyd, the managing director of Curtis Brown, says that his agency retains no money. "The money comes in, and the money goes out, into an anonymous bank account, and then to a charity," Lloyd told me. "In a sense, it is an embarrassment from the past that just happens to be there."

The American branch of the Hitler family stems from the marriage of Alois Hitler and Franziska Matzelsberger, who had two children: Alois, Jr., in 1882, and Angela, in 1883. When Franziska died of tuberculosis, Alois, Sr., married a second cousin, Klara Pölzl, who gave birth to Adolf, in 1889, and Paula, in 1896.

Alois, Jr., clashed violently with his authoritarian father and left home by the age of fourteen. In 1909, he was working as a waiter in Dublin, when he met Brigid Elizabeth Dowling, the seventeen-year-old daughter of a local businessman, at a horse show. Alois, who has been described as a handsome man with Old World charm—he wore white waistcoats and kept a pocket watch on a gold chain—eloped with Brigid to London in 1910. They settled in Liverpool, and a year later they had a son, William Patrick, whom she called Pat and he called Willie.

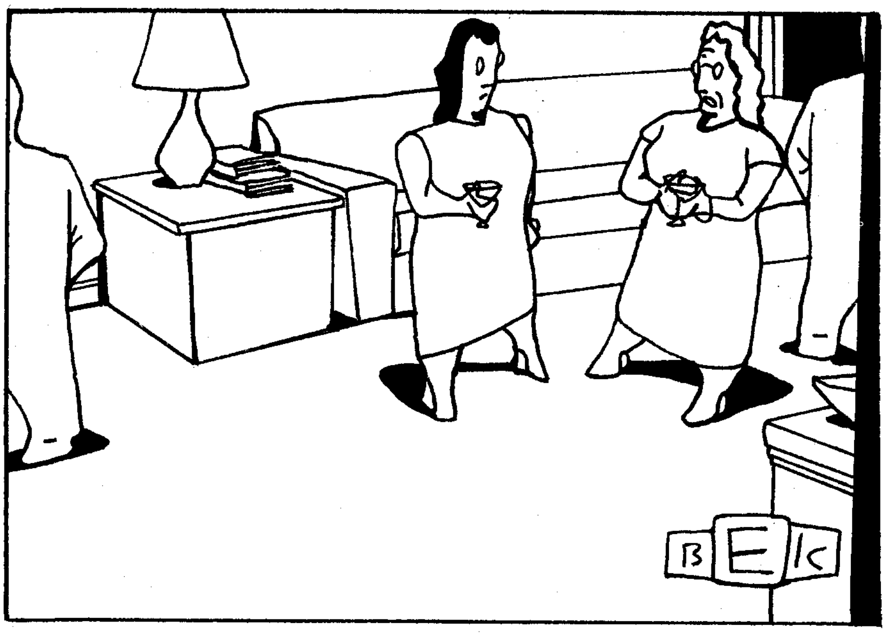
Shortly before the First World War, Alois abandoned his wife and son, and moved to Hamburg to set up a safety-razor business. Brigid assumed that Alois had died in the war, until she learned, in 1923, that he was alive, had remarried, and was living in Hamburg. After the family made inquiries, Alois was put on trial for bigamy. Brigid, a devout Catholic, refused to grant a divorce, but intervened to earn Alois a reduced sentence and reëstablished a tenuous family link. Many years later, Brigid told the *Times* that she had left her husband four times during their marriage. "He was very cruel—he was Hitler the Second. 'I'll bend you or I'll break you,' he said."

In the summer of 1929, Willie, then eighteen years old, visited his father and stepmother, Hedwig, who were running a restaurant in the Berlin suburb of Charlottenburg. "He spent the summer with us learning German and collecting stories about the Hitler family," one relative recounted after the war. "He had every right to know these things." That summer, Willie met his Aunt Angela, Alois's full-blood sibling, but he had to join thousands of spectators at that year's Nuremberg Rally in order to glimpse his Uncle Adolf.

No sooner had Willie returned to England than he began marketing himself in the English press as the nephew of Adolf Hitler. When word reached Hitler that his "English nephew" was giving interviews to British newspapers—in particular, the *Evening Standard* and the *Daily Express*—he had Willie summoned to Berlin. As Willie later recalled in an interview in *Paris Soir*, the audience with Hitler took place in a hotel suite. Entering the room with his father, Alois, and his Aunt Angela, Willie found Hitler, dressed in a business suit, standing in front of three enormous windows and staring down at the street. Angela sat down, but Alois and Willie remained standing. For what happened next, one must rely on a later, second-hand account by Brigid.

"To me, exactly to me, this has to happen," Hitler roared, according to Brigid. "I am surrounded by idiots. Yes, you, you are idiots. You are tearing down everything I have built with my own two hands." Turning first to his bigamist-cum-restaurateur half brother ("You criminal. You succeeded in smashing everything"), Hitler then rounded on Willie: "What did you tell the newspapers? Who gave you permission to appoint yourself an authority on my private affairs?" As the nephew stared at his uncle, Alois explained to Willie that the New York office of the Hearst newspapers had called the Braunhaus in Munich and demanded to speak with Hitler personally. In particular, they wanted to know if he had a nephew in London who was an authority on the Hitler family.

"They put personal questions to me, to me!" Hitler said in Brigid's account. "No one must drag my private affairs into the newspapers. I have never said one word they can use. And now there is a 'nephew' to tell them all the miserable little details they want to know." As Hitler assailed his kinfolk, Willie later told his mother, he paced, flailing the air with his fists, his hair flopping wildly across his face. Hitler then left the room,



"I like his earlier work better, particularly the ones I said I didn't like at the time."

threatening, "I'll kill myself. I'll put a gun to my head." Following this rant, Hitler reportedly gave Willie two thousand pounds and told him to return to England and publicly retract his claims of kinship. Willie followed his uncle's instructions, but at the same time, with the assistance of the British foreign office and the British Consul General in Vienna, he began assembling a dossier of birth certificates, baptismal records, and other documents that provided irrefutable evidence of his blood tie to the Hitler family.

In the summer of 1931, word reached Obersalzberg that Willie was again talking to the press, this time about the suicide of Aunt Angela's twenty-three-year-old daughter, Geli, and her suspected intimate relationship with her Uncle Adolf. (In September of 1931, Geli was found dead in Hitler's apartment on Munich's Prinzregentenplatz.) Willie was called back to Germany to explain himself. Years later in New York, he admitted to an O.S.S. officer that he had been trying to extort money from his Uncle Adolf. An F.B.I. report quoted an informant as saying that Willie "had attempted to use a mild form of blackmail against Adolf Hitler in order to secure for himself a position of importance with little work attached to the position." Another F.B.I. informant described Willie as "an exceedingly lazy individual," who "had no initiative and constantly sought a position which paid well with little work."

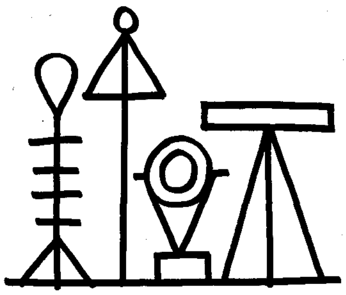
Beyond the extensive press coverage, and F.B.I. reports obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, material on Willie's years in London and Berlin includes the memoirs of his mother, Brigid, and a four-hundred-page typescript purportedly based on the recollections and letters of Alois and his second wife, Hedwig.

I came across this manuscript in the archives of Gerd Heidemann, a collector of Nazi-era documents, relics, and photographs, who is best known for the "Hitler Diaries," the notorious fraud that in 1983 cost the magazine *Stern* nine million Deutsche marks and tainted its reputation, as well as that of the London *Sunday Times,* and earned Heidemann a prison sentence of four years and eight months. In May, I visited Heidemann in his Hamburg apartment, a labyrinth of meticulously organized black binders, which contain not only thousands of primary-source documents but hundreds of original glass-plate negatives that Heidemann bought from the son of Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's personal photographer.

Heidemann, who is a pale, heavy-set man in his late sixties, had just been released from the hospital, where he'd been treated for a heart condition. He told me that he had obtained the manuscript approximately twenty years ago from a woman who, he says, lived in the same house as Alois and Hedwig Hitler. Like the phony "diaries," the typescript, which has handwritten pagination and no title page, supplies more family anecdote than historical insight—for instance, Angela Raubal once called Eva Braun a "stupid goose" to her face. Clues in the manuscript suggest that the author may have been related to the family by marriage. Heidemann said that he could no longer remember the name or the address of the owner, but claimed that he did not doubt the authenticity of the manuscript. Experts would not find this persuasive.

Of far more certain provenance is a bound typescript by Brigid Hitler, which was discovered in the early seventies in the rare-manuscript collection of the New York Public Library. According to Mimi Bowling, the curator of manuscripts, the two-volume set, called "My Brother-in-Law Adolf Hitler," came to the library in the late fifties or early sixties from the papers of Edmond Pauker, a literary agent and play broker, who had acquired them from one Mary Finley.

The memoirs, which are overwrought and somewhat dubious, were published in London in 1979, by Duckworth, and distributed in the United States by Southwest Book Services, in Dallas. Among Brigid's more fanciful assertions is that in the winter of 1912 her brother-in-law, dodging military conscription, sought refuge in England. "When Adolf came to visit us in Liverpool," Brigid writes, "his moustache had been of the handlebar type, rather full and soft." She claims that she succeeded in convincing him to trim his facial hair, setting in motion a reductive process that within a decade resulted in Hitler's trademark look. When Brigid visited Alois's restaurant in the late thirties, she claimed to have found it filled with Nazi glitterati. "In one corner was Leni Riefenstahl, the film director," Brigid wrote. "All heads turned to stare when Goebbels came in with his attractive wife, both bowing like film stars." (When I consulted Leni Riefenstahl, who lives in southern Bavaria, she said that she remembered the restaurant but had never visited it.)



The memoirs do succeed in one respect. By the end of Brigid's narrative (which moves from Alois's restaurant to Adolf's mountain estate to Paula's third-floor Vienna apartment), you understand Hitler's distaste for his Irish sister-in-law and her son. While awaiting his turn at the gallows in Nuremberg, Hans Frank, Hitler's personal lawyer and the Nazi governor of Poland, recalled that the Führer once described Willie as "*eines seiner widerlichsten Verwandten*"—one of his most repulsive relatives.

The shady dealings of the mother-and-son team have earned mention in numerous accounts. In one of them, Hans Hitler, a young relative who was visiting Alois in Berlin in early 1934, encountered a handsome man holding forth in a bar along the fashionable Kurfürstendamm. At first, Hans mistook the man for an artist or a movie star, but subsequently discovered him to be William Patrick Hitler, who boasted that he had come back to Berlin to establish himself in his "uncle's Reich."

When Willie called on his Uncle Adolf at the Reich Chancellery in the autumn of 1933, declaring the Hitler name a liability on the London job market, Rudolf Hess, Hitler's personal secretary, helped him find work. At first, Willie clerked at the Reich Credit Bank, but he complained about the low pay and was given a job with Opel. As preparation for an executive position,

"My seven-year-old is a prince, but my forty-seven-year-old is a pain in the ass."

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Willie worked in several departments at the Opel automobile plant and served as a salesman for the Opel Winter dealership on the Kurfürstendamm, until his uncle intervened, claiming that such work was beneath the dignity of a member of the Hitler family.

Willie's finances remained tight—he lived in a one-bedroom apartment in a working-class district of Berlin—but his social life flourished. He claimed to have attended the opera in Bayreuth with his Aunt Angela and visited his Uncle Adolf both at the Reich Chancellery in Berlin and at the Berghof. Willie became a favorite of Berlin's theatre crowd as well as of the city's large Russian émigré community. Brigid once boasted that her son had as many as ten social invitations on a single weekend. "In the last few weeks you have been seen in some very fine company, with counts and barons," Hitler chastised his nephew on one occasion, or so Willie told *Paris Soir* in August of 1939. "This is not your circle. You are to have no part of such things." But it is easy to imagine the temptations that awaited a young, unmarried Englishman with the Hitler surname in Berlin in the thirties. His father used the family connection, too. In September of 1937, the New York *Times* reported that "business is booming at the Tea Room Alois." Alois, Jr., had relocated in a principal Berlin square. "The waiters greet customers with 'Heil Hitler,' " the *Times* went on, "but they are cautious about discussing the relationship between the boss and Der Fuehrer."

On a visit to England in November of 1937, when he was twenty-six, Willie had a Führer-style mustache and parted his hair on the right, like his uncle. "I am the only legal descendant of the Hitler family," Willie told the *Daily Express*. He crossed his arms in "characteristic Führer fashion" and then declared, "That gesture must be in the blood. I find myself doing it more and more." Two years later, Willie was back in London, this time denouncing the Führer as a madman and claiming that he had been terrorized by the Gestapo and pressured by his uncle to renounce his British citizenship and become a citizen of the Reich. In exchange, Willie later claimed, Hitler had offered him a key position in the Reich.

According to an F.B.I. report, late in March of 1939, five months before Hitler invaded Poland, the William Morris Theatrical Agency dispatched Willie to the United States on a speaking tour. (William Morris has no record of any dealings with him.) Willie arrived in New York aboard the S.S. Normandie, using the alias Carter Stevens, and resided briefly at the Buckingham Hotel, on Sixth Avenue and Fifty-seventh Street. He spent his first week in bed with influenza. *Time* announced Willie's arrival with an article called "Hitler v. Hitler," which reported on the tensions between the uncle and nephew and on Willie's warning that the Nazi leader was "singularly vulnerable on the question of his family relations." That summer, *Look* ran a lavish six-page spread—complete with Hitler family photos, birth certificates, and telegrams—under the heading “Why I Hate My Uncle.”

Brigid also diligently exploited the Hitler connection. In 1936, she visited Berlin and paid a surprise visit to Berchtesgaden, where Hitler refused to see her. When Hitler rejected his sister-in-law’s written plea for financial support—he claimed he could not send German currency to London—Brigid headed for Hollywood. “Interesting is the news that Harry Rosen is making overtures to Brigid Hitler, sister-in-law to the Nazi dictator, who is in this country to act as technical adviser on ‘The Mad Dog of Europe,’” the gossip columnist Louella Parsons reported in 1939. “Hitler’s brother, ’tis said, is a bartender in Germany and the report is that Brigid is on the outs with her in-laws.” Brigid was described in the *Times* as a “buxom woman of forty-nine summers, with coal black hair and smiling eyes.” And, evidently, a taste for vengeance. While working as a volunteer with the British War Relief Society, on Fifth Avenue across from Tiffany’s, Brigid told the *Times* that “hanging” would be “too good” for her brother-in-law Adolf, adding, “He should be killed by slow torture, a little bit every day.”

Willie, who was described in the New York press as speaking in “clipped British accents,” lectured across the United States and Canada for the next two years, sharing family stories of incest, bigamy, leather whips, and plans for world domination. By then, according to a richly detailed F.B.I. field report from April of 1942, the William Morris agency had dropped him, and he worked with the Harold R. Peat Agency. Peat himself apparently had little regard for his client, and, after having booked approximately twenty-five lectures, urged Willie to find another lecture bureau. To the F.B.I., Peat “expressed the opinion that the subject in all probability would be loyal to the Nazi government and Adolf Hitler if the Fuehrer had obtained a position for the subject which would have paid him exceedingly well.”

Newspaper accounts report that Willie spoke in Manhattan’s Marble Collegiate Church, where he said he would “explain the mystery of Rudolf Hess,” and at a Stop Hitler First Rally, where the speakers included the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. Willie could draw a crowd—six hundred at the Advertising Club in Buffalo, and an estimated fifteen hundred at a Y.M.C.A. gathering in Coatesville, Pennsylvania. “We had the largest attendance we’ve ever had at a Saturday meeting at which he spoke,” the president of the Wisconsin Education Association recalled. “He received an ovation when he finished.”

In October of 1940, when Willie was living at 189-18 184th Street in Queens, he registered for military service with Local Board 245. At six feet one and weighing a hundred and eighty pounds, Willie was classified 1-A but was ultimately rejected because his uncle had served as a corporal in the German Army between 1914 and 1918. “I do know Germany, and I think I would make a very effective bombardier,” Willie complained to the *Herald Tribune*, observing that he might try to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. He added that if he did so he would change his name. “It only costs fifty cents,” Willie said. “Hitler is a rather uncomfortable name, you know.”

THE FOLLOWING IS AVAILABLE TO COVETED YOUNG VIEWERS ONLY.

Instead, Willie wrote to President Roosevelt, asking to have the draft board decision overruled. In his three-page letter to the President, dated March 3, 1942, he described himself as “the nephew and only descendant of the ill-famed Chancellor and Leader of Germany who today so despotically seeks to enslave the free and Christian peoples of the globe.” He then went on:

> Under your masterful leadership men of all creeds and nationalities are waging desperate war to determine, in the last analysis, whether they shall finally serve and live in an ethical society under God or become enslaved by a devilish and pagan regime.

Roosevelt, on March 14th, passed the request, signed “Patrick Hitler,” to J. Edgar Hoover, the F.B.I. director. “In addition to the interview with Hitler, contact was had with other individuals who have been associated with him since his arrival in this country,” Hoover reported to the White House, following a monthlong investigation. “No information was developed to indicate that he was engaged in any activities of a subversive nature.” In March of 1944, with a newsreel camera rolling, Adolf Hitler’s thirty-three-year-old nephew was inducted into the United States Navy, where he served for the next two years and was a seaman first class.

Though Willie attended naval training stations in upstate New York, southeast Texas, and Davisville, Rhode Island, and earned the American Campaign Medal and the Second World War Victory Medal, there is no official record of his military service. Scott Baron, author of “They Also Served: Military Biographies of Uncommon Americans,” believes that Willie’s military files were destroyed in a 1972 fire in a military storage facility in St. Louis. "I have tried seven ways to Wednesday to find more about him," Baron told me.

John Toland, the Hitler biographer, has said that William Patrick Hitler named his firstborn son Adolf, and Toland apparently relished the shivers that this produced in an audience familiar with "The Boys from Brazil" and other books and movies of the genre. William Carmody, an operations research analyst for the Army, remembers hearing Toland speak in the early eighties at the Monmouth County Library, in Shrewsbury, New Jersey. "Toland saw a family snapshot of W. P. Hitler, holding a baby, postwar," Carmody wrote in an E-mail. "The photo was captioned on the back to the effect that it was W. P. holding 'baby Adolf.' The audience was very entertained by this, and Toland finished the matter off by assuring us that 'Adolf Hitler is alive and well, and living somewhere in the New York City metropolitan area!'"

In fact, none of William Patrick Hitler's children were named Adolf—his firstborn son was Alexander—but even if it was a family joke Toland, who no longer grants interviews, seems to have taken it seriously: he includes it as a footnote in his two-volume 1976 biography, "Adolf Hitler." Except for the Toland interview, though, Willie does not seem to have spoken publicly to anyone about his Uncle Adolf since the war. His last public appearance was in February, 1946, when he was discharged from the Navy at Fargo Barracks, in Boston. At the time, he told the press that he intended to return to his mother in Manhattan and apply for United States citizenship. After that, he tried to vanish from sight, and largely succeeded.

Eight months later, on October 2, 1946, Willie, who was then living with his mother at 505 West 142nd Street, in Harlem, applied for a Social Security card under the name William Hiller. That year, he graduated with a B.S.S. from the City College of New York and enrolled in an M.B.A. program at City College's School of Business and Civic Education, which is now Baruch College. An employee of Baruch's public-information office told me that Willie had registered for courses in economics, law, accounting, and Spanish, but appears to have left after four semesters without having completed his degree.

Willie's first job in New York seems to have been with John W. Draper, a urologist whose office was in the East Sixties. Then, according to John Toland, he worked as an administrator in the urology department of a New York-area hospital—almost certainly Bellevue. Toland refused to divulge anything about Willie to Ron Rosenbaum, the author of "Explaining Hitler," or to others. The F.B.I. files on William Patrick Hitler and his mother contain nothing about his military service or postwar activities. Nor is there any hint that Willie and Alois communicated after the war, although both took the name Hiller.

Two of Dr. Draper's former partners still have a practice in Manhattan, but neither physician remembers Willie by that name or by the name he took when he got married, to a native of Germany, and moved to Long Island. (Willie's subsequent alias is derived, curiously, from the name of a prolific but obscure pro-Hitler writer.) His mother, Brigid, who died in 1969, lived to see four grandchildren, all boys. William Patrick Hitler died in 1987, at the age of seventy-six.

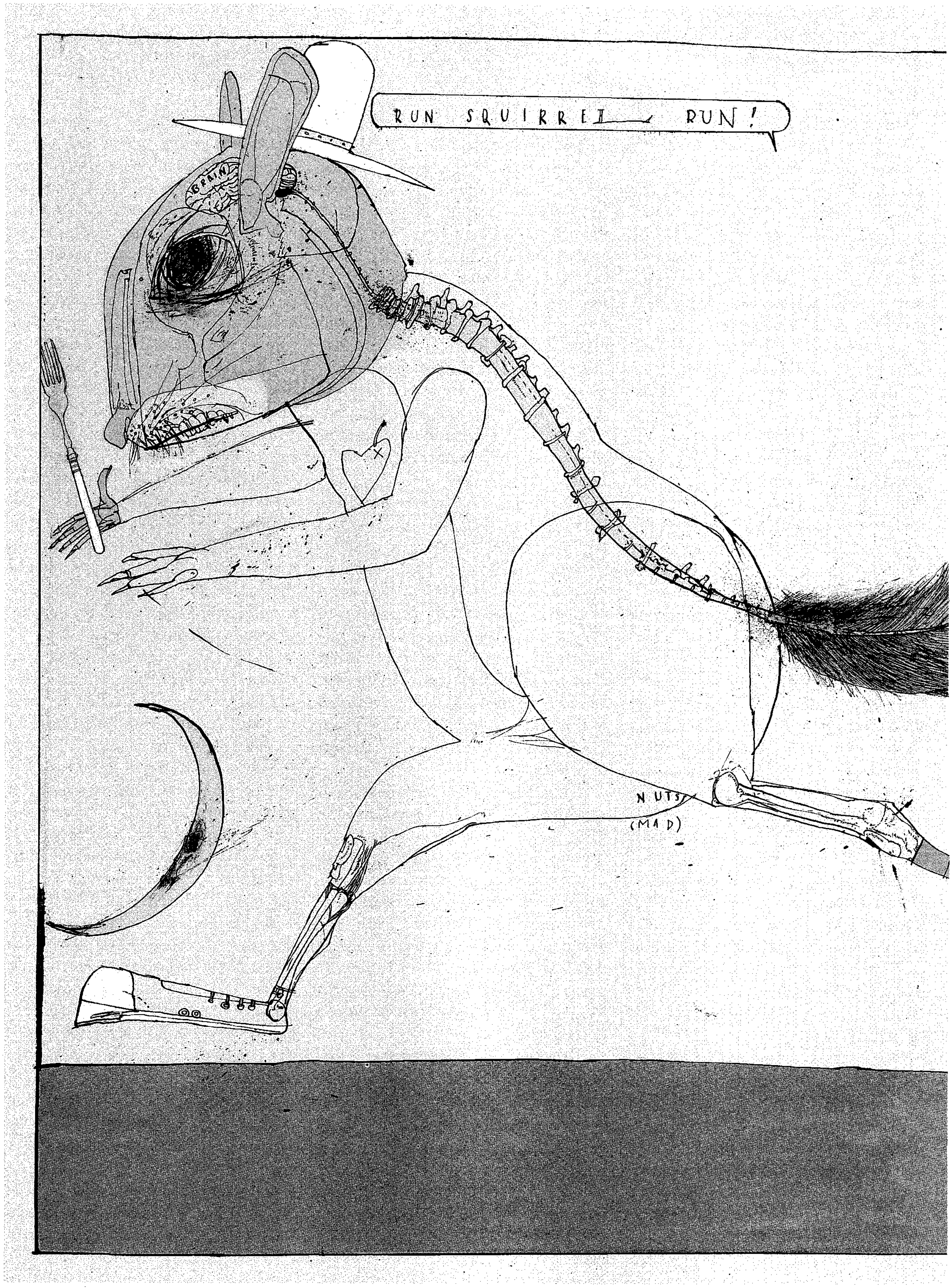
Today, three of his sons, ranging in age from their mid-thirties to their early fifties, live on Long Island. The fourth son died in the eighties. The surviving brothers, according to Dun & Bradstreet, have a small incorporated business, which was estimated to have generated less than two hundred thousand dollars in 1999; the Dun & Bradstreet report also noted that repeated attempts to get in touch with the business proved unsuccessful.

Two years ago, David Gardner, a correspondent for a South African newspaper, traced the Hitler family to America, but was turned away by Willie's widow, who is now in her seventies. According to Gardner, the widow said that the family did not grant interviews. "We were married for a long time and my husband never wanted anyone to know who he was," she told Gardner. "Now my sons don't want anything to do with it. It was all too long ago. There has been enough trouble with the name." The family, Gardner reported, dismissed any potential claim on a Hitler estate, calling it "blood money."

Last March, I discovered the whereabouts of the family, but when I tried to meet them I encountered resolute silence. After leaving messages on an answering machine, to which there was never a reply, and sending letters by messenger, I visited their homes. One brother lives in a complex of rental apartments and town houses; another in a small one-story house in a more rural community, where his father had lived. On the day I was on Long Island, the town house was dark, but at the other house the door was answered by a man who wore a T-shirt and jeans; his thick, brown hair was neatly trimmed and combed straight back. The man, who seemed nervous, said that he could not talk about William Patrick without consulting other family members, and quickly shut the door. I later telephoned the third brother, who lives in a more affluent part of Long Island. He hung up as soon as I identified myself.

Eventually, a lawyer representing the family called to say that his clients did not want to talk. "They are very, very private people and very fearful," he said. "They're really scared, not only socially, as maybe being treated as some sort of pariah, but also physically, of some crazy person who's off center." Despite a promise that any interview would be conducted with guarantees of confidentiality, the lawyer observed, "We can talk logically about it, but when something has been such a thing throughout your whole life—that you've been hiding your identity from everybody, forever . . ." He stopped. In another conversation, he said, "It's just a quirk of fate of being born." Later, he added, "If they come forward, then where's your life after this?"

So determined is this family to shun publicity that, even in death, it has managed to keep most of its secrets. The widow of the brother who died has remarried and won't talk about her late father-in-law. William Patrick Hitler's tombstone bears no last name. His death certificate is on file at a local town hall, but he left no will, and little else to remember him by. ♦


RUN SQUIRREL RUN!
BRAIN
NUTS (MAD)

It wasn't so much the threat of mad-squirrel disease that rattled Kentuckians as the hillbilly image it inspired. "Is there anything as gulli

LETTER FROM KENTUCKY

SQUIRREL AND MAN

Is a local custom worth dying for?

BY BURKHARD BILGER

A September dawn in western Kentucky, windless and clear, with the sky going to lavender behind the high branches of beech trees. At the bottom of a hollow, Steve Rector and I wind our way along an ochre creek bed, stepping slowly from rock to rock to avoid the crackling leaves. These beeches should still be emerald green so early in the fall, this creek overflowing its banks, but the area is in the throes of perhaps the worst drought in half a century. The one puddle in sight has been claimed by a box turtle, and camouflage clothes are our only cover.

Rector, ahead of me, crouches down, balancing a 16-gauge Winchester on his shoulder, and comes up with a handful of broken shells: beechnuts, gnawed open by little mouths. "I came through here on Sundee, but there wasn't any cuttin's at all," he whispers, moving on. In the distance, a woodpecker's hammering echoes through the forest. Using his shotgun as a crutch, Rector tries to clamber up the bank, but his feet slip. He reaches for a sapling, but it isn't there, and all three hundred pounds of him come crashing down. For a moment, he just lies in the dirt, his basset-hound features looking more than usually defeated. "Well," he says, groaning as he gets up. "I guess I must have that mad-cow disease after all."

How many other squirrel hunters, I wonder, are thinking the same thing? The epidemic that has killed fifty-six people in Britain, and has sent almost three million cows to the incinerator, is half a continent and an ocean away. No American cow has died of mad-cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy, and British beef has never found a market here. Still, panic has a way of discovering new victims.

In August of 1997, two neurologists, Joseph Berger and Eric Weisman, both recent transplants to Kentucky, published a letter in the British medical journal *The Lancet*. A disturbing pattern had come to their attention. In the previous four years, five patients in western Kentucky had been diagnosed with Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, or C.J.D., of which mad-cow disease is a variant. All five patients had one thing in common: they ate squirrel brains. Given that some forms of C.J.D. can be transmitted by the eating of infected brains, and that most mammals seem able to carry the disease, the connection made sense. "Caution might be exercised," the authors concluded, "in the ingestion of this arboreal rodent."

In the late nineteen-nineties, as the terror of AIDS slowly subsided in America, fears of future viruses were beginning to flare up. Here was the perfect fuel for all that smoldering paranoia. Mad-squirrel disease, if it existed, was as exotic and insidious as it was luridly debilitating, yet most people were no more likely to get it than they were the plague. If AIDS once seemed an affliction devised by country Baptists to punish city dwellers, here was the urbanite's revenge: a disease, common only among squirrel-brain-eating hillbillies, that turned its victims into demented fools.

The feeding frenzy was brief but gleeful. The *Times* began by garnishing the story with gothic details. "Families that eat brains follow only certain rituals," the paper reported, and then it went on to quote Eric Weisman: "Someone comes by the house with just the head of a squirrel and gives it to the matriarch of the family. She shaves the fur off the top of the head and fries the head whole. The skull is cracked open at the dinner table and the brains are sucked out." Squirrels recently killed on the road, the *Times* added, "are often thrown into the pot." Soon Jay Leno

a Yankee?" a columnist asked.

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID HUGHES

and David Letterman and columnists across the country were riffing on squirrel brains. “This report raises some troubling questions,” the syndicated humorist Dave Barry wrote. “1. Since when do squirrels have brains? 2. Have squirrels and cows been mating? How? 3. Doesn’t a person who eats roadkill rodent organs pretty much deserve to die?”

Steve Rector first heard about the disease at the power plant in Paradise, Kentucky, where he works. He was putting some fried squirrel heads into the microwave for lunch, he remembers, when one of the guys mentioned the mad-cow-disease story in the Owensboro paper. “I figured that if it was really bad, like the bubonic plague, it would be on TV,” Rector says. So he started to watch the evening news, scan the local obituaries, and look for signs of strange behavior in local squirrels. Though he didn’t see or hear anything more, he was spooked enough to lay off brains for the first time in thirty years. But, like most of the squirrel hunters I met, he couldn’t stay away for too long. “I just thought, You gotta die of somethin’,” he says. “First, it was cigarettes cause cancer, then pesticides, and then the water you drink. But I been eatin’ squirrel brains since I was six years old, and I ain’t dead yet.”

It’s midmorning by now, and our vest pockets have yet to hold any dead squirrels. But as we start to circle back to Rector’s truck, which is parked at the edge of the forest, he stops suddenly and gestures for me to hang back. Peering at the crest of a distant hill, he slowly raises his shotgun to his shoulder and shoots twice in quick succession, the reports ripping the air around us. Then he hustles up the slope toward a skinny maple tree.

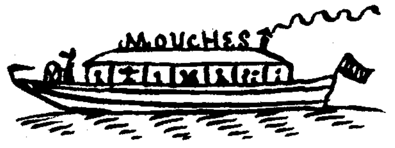
Rector is no champion marksman. He is forty-four, and his eyes have developed astigmatism, and he can no longer use a rifle. His reflexes have slowed down, his heart beats irregularly, and his fingers go numb in the morning cold. Yet when he reaches the tree his face breaks into a boyish grin. “That was a hell of a shot,” he says. “Sixty yards, if anything.” Reaching into the leaf litter, he pulls out a young squirrel, its tiny chest still heaving. “Smell of ’im,” he says, almost tenderly, lifting the warm body to my nose. “Isn’t that just like . . . the woods?” Then he takes the animal by the tail and beats its head methodically against the tree. “Don’t want to do that too hard,” he says, after a couple of whacks. “Else I’ll spoil the best part.”

If hunters around here seem uncommonly suspicious of authority (medical or otherwise), if they clamp on to their traditions even at peril of their lives, they have good reason. Ninety years ago, when Rector’s father’s father was cutting giant scaly-bark hickories out of the bottomlands and rafting them to the mill, it was said that the land would make its people rich. But Eastern land speculators reaped most of the timber and mining profits, and a tobacco monopoly took what was left. When the virgin forests were gone, Rector’s grandfather went to work as a sharecropper and then as a coal miner, and when his son turned twenty-two he joined him.

Miners back then dug shafts two hundred feet down and up to four miles long, with thin wooden props and little ventilation. They used black powder to blast out the coal, and steel picks to chop it up, praying that their carbide lamps wouldn’t ignite a pocket of gas. After as many as seventeen hours underground, they emerged as black as crows and got paid in company scrip redeemable only at company stores. The result was best summed up by the singer Merle Travis, whose father and brothers worked in the same mine as Rector’s mother’s father:

You load sixteen tons and what do you get?
Another day older and deeper in debt.
St. Peter don’t you call me ’cause I can’t go.
I owe my soul to the company store.

When Rector was a little boy, and a life underground seemed his inevitable lot, he had a recurring dream. He was standing on a high hill overlooking a strip mine, waiting for his father to drive by so he could wave to him. The mine pit far below had filled with rain, and the acids in the coal had turned the water blue. “I was always wearin’ a red shirt and bluejeans, and every time I’d just fall off that edge toward that Bahama-blue water,” he says. “I’m terrible scared of heights, and I’m not too good a swimmer, and I swear that fall took forever.”



In his dream, Rector always woke up before he hit the water. But in real life it was the coal business itself that saved him. “Don’t bother,” the owner told his father when he went looking for a job for his son. “The mines are almost played out. You’re better off lettin’ that boy finish high school.” So Rector took a job as a meat cutter at a supermarket, while his father stayed on at the mine. His father’s father died of consumption, exacerbated by black-lung disease. “The last two years of his life he had to sleep sittin’ up in a chair,” Rector says. “Couldn’t get his breath otherwise.”

Eventually, Rector got married, had a son, and was promoted to meat manager at the supermarket. “I had a forty-acre farm, a brand-new house, and a brand-new Crown Victoria car,” he says. But then, eleven years ago, his wife left him, and he was back where he started. To keep up with alimony and child-support payments, he took a union job at the power plant, shovelling coal ashes with a front-end loader. He has since remarried, and moved to a small and nondescript ranch house—“a plain old country house,” as he puts it—just off Paradise Street, in the town of Greenville, in Muhlenberg County. To a fan of folk music, staying there is something like staying at the Heartbreak Hotel. It constantly brings to mind the refrain of a song:

“Oh Daddy won’t you take me back to Muhlenberg County
Down by the Green River where Paradise lay?”
“Well, I’m sorry my son, but you’re too late in asking.
Mr. Peabody’s coal train has hauled it away.”

Rector knows the words by heart. In a county that calls itself the Thumb-Picking Capital of the World, his virtuosity on the guitar has earned him an honorary road sign, and “Paradise” is a common request. Only hunting, an even older allegiance, claims more of his time than playing. He first went into the woods with his father at the age of six, carrying a BB gun to kill crippled squirrels. At ten, he had his own shotgun. "And then pretty soon I was huntin' all the time."

In New York or Boston, where squirrels eat handouts and scamper impudently above park benches, squirrel hunting can seem like poor sport. But in Kentucky squirrels leap to the canopy at the first sign of movement. They baa to one another, like lambs on speed, sounding the alarm. They flatten their bodies against trees, rotating slowly to keep the trunk between them and the hunter, or dive into the nearest knothole. "I'd say they're pretty damn smart," Rector says. "I don't know how many pairs of my socks I've burned up trying to smoke 'em out."

Rector's father taught him a few squirrel-hunting tricks, but most of what he knows he learned from his cousin Jimmy Vincent. Tall, skinny, and as agile as an otter, Jimmy was nine years older than Steve and half-orphaned by the state: his father was in prison for killing a man. When Jimmy was ten years old, another boy shot him in the right eye with a BB gun. ("It didn't bust it," Rector explains. "It just went behind the eyeball, so he couldn't see with it anymore—it had a funny shine to it, like it was made of glass.") But Jimmy simply learned to aim from his left shoulder, and killed more squirrels with one eye than most kids could with two.

"Jimmy was like the Chet Atkins of squirrel hunting," Rector says. "He had like a sixth sense about 'em. He could smell 'em through the leaves." If the woods went suddenly quiet, Jimmy would pick up a nut and scratch it with his pocketknife—an all-clear sign to the squirrels. If a knothole was within reach, he'd cut a cross in the end of a green stick, poke it in the hole, and twist until it got caught in some hair; then he'd pull out the squealing animal. If a squirrel was hiding on the far side of a tree, he'd tie a string to a sapling and shake it on one side and wait for the squirrel to circle around to the other. "Back when I hunted with my daddy, he used to just say, 'Walk around there, boy, and shake that bush,'" Rector remembers. "It wasn't till later that I realized he was usin' me as his string."

All through their youth, Jimmy and Steve kept the family supplied with squirrel meat. It was said, in those days, that squirrel soup could cure a cold, but mostly its healing properties were in the form of raw nutrition—coal-company wages could pay for meat only twice a month. The two boys would get up before dawn, kill a mess of squirrels, and make it to school by seven-thirty. (In elementary school, they hung the tails from their bicycle handlebars; in high school, from their car antennas.) "I remember one time Jimmy and I killed ninety-nine squirrels in a stretch of five days," Rector says. "My mom just pressure-cooked 'em all and put 'em in jars with barbecue sauce. That way, all winter long we could have squirrel sandwiches whenever we wanted."

After our first morning of hunting, we dropped by to see Juanita Adkins, the owner of the property we'd been hunting on. Small and neatly put together, with wide glasses, bright-white hair, and mischievous eyes, Adkins is eighty-three years old. She took up painting in 1981, and her farmhouse is hung with skillful oils flanked by blue ribbons she has won for them at state and county fairs. Standing in her living room and admiring her animal paintings, Rector asked her if she'd ever eaten squirrel brains. Adkins looked at him as if he were a little dim. "When I was growin' up," she said, "that's all I'd ever eat was the brain."

"They tell me you're a nincompoop, Henderson, but you certainly do know how to maintain a crease."

Not so long ago, Eric Weisman might have laughed at a story like Adkins'. He might have dismissed the eating of squirrel brains as yet another puzzling local custom, in a state with an endless supply of them. Then, in 1993, a squirrel-brain eater showed up at Weisman's Neurobehavioral Institute, in Beaver Dam, Kentucky. Soon Weisman was asking all his patients if they had the same habit.

At the age of fifty-four, that first patient was robust, articulate, and, as mayor, sharp enough to run his home town. Yet he'd been laid off from his day job as a salesman after forgetting to fill out the left side of sales forms. And he'd hit a nun's car in broad daylight, because he couldn't see her coming from the left.

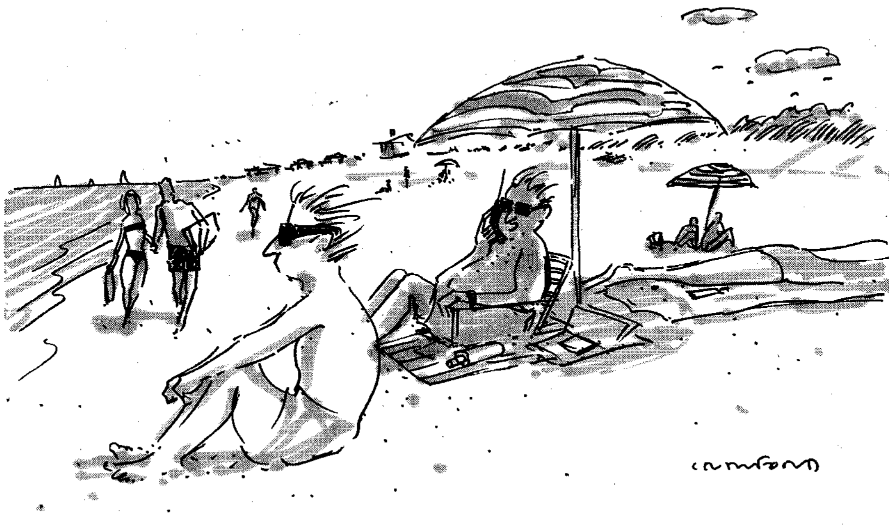
"The hospital in Bowling Green said it was a stroke at first, and then a brain tumor," Weisman says. "Then they sent him to me." In the tests that followed, a pattern emerged: if Weisman asked his patient to draw a clock, for instance, he would cram all the numbers on the right side of its face. "He had what we call a nondominant-hemispheric syndrome," Weisman says. "The left side of the world just didn't exist for him." An E.E.G. showed a periodic disturbance in his brain waves, and an M.R.I. scan revealed that the right side of his brain had atrophied. But what was the cause, and why were the symptoms progressing so rapidly? "I just didn't have a good answer," Weisman says. "And then I saw him jerk."

Some eighty years before, a German physician named Hans Gerhard Creutzfeldt had seen the same twitch in one of his patients. She was a twenty-three-year-old orphan who had once cheerfully worked as a maid at a convent; now she refused to eat or bathe, grew paranoid, and assumed strange positions. There was worse to come. Bouts of wild laughter grew into ceaseless screams; chronic tics amplified into epileptic seizures; periods of stupor devolved into catatonia and finally death. When Creutzfeldt autopsied the patient's brain, he found masses of fibrous brown astroglial cells—whose primary function is to repair damaged tissue—spread through it like spackling on an old plaster wall.

Even today, no one knows for sure what causes such damage. Most doctors blame bits of rogue protein called prions, while others attribute it to stealth viruses. Whatever its origin, the disease that was eventually named for Creutzfeldt and his colleague, Alfons Jakob, is among the most perplexing in all neuropathology. Invariably fatal, C.J.D. chooses victims across gender, race, class, and geographic lines. It can incubate, unseen, for decades, and predominantly strikes the middle-aged and the elderly. Over the years, forms of it have been found in sheep (scrapie), cows (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), and certain cannibals in New Guinea (kuru). Mad-cow disease and kuru have further been shown to infect those who eat infected meat, particularly brains. Generally, however, C.J.D. strikes rarely and randomly, killing one person in a million. "It's like plane crashes," Weisman says. "It only seems to happen to nice people."

Not long after the mayor's first visit to Weisman's clinic, his mind began to seize up with increasing violence. What had looked like hiccups gave way to full-fledged spasms, and his mental lapses spread to his whole brain. "If you said, 'With the pen, touch the comb,' he could do it fine," Weisman says. "But if you said, 'Touch the comb with the pen,' he wouldn't understand." Meanwhile, other patients were arriving with related symptoms. There were a few who couldn't walk straight and two with full-blown dementia. Over the next five years, Weisman treated six people in the early stages of C.J.D.

"I don't even like to look at that chart," Weisman says, referring to the mayor's case. "It makes me start crying." Yet there is something of the magpie in most neurologists—something that can't resist the odd mental disorder, the shiny fragment of a mind that somehow casts light on all human consciousness. For Weisman, these rare cases—related to a disease that was then much in the news—must have glimmered like will-o'-the-wisps, beckoning him from what had been a long exile.



"Lisa, bring out the Alistair Cheng files and an iced mochaccino, if you will, please."

Born in 1957 to a Jewish family in Peabody, Massachusetts, Weisman had once seemed destined to become a Boston intellectual, if not quite a Brahmin. His father was an artist and a businessman, who sculpted the heads of the swan boats in the Public Garden. His mother was a soprano with a Boston opera company. By the age of six, Eric was drawing pictures of brains. By sixteen, he was taking a course in neuroanatomy at M.I.T. He entered a summer program at Harvard after his junior year of high school, dreaming of becoming a brain surgeon. But when fall arrived he decided not to apply to college there. "It was so competitive," he says. "People were stealing my research, pulling pages out of reference books so no one else could read them." He enrolled at Bard, started a rock band, and let his grade-point average slip so low that he couldn't get into an American medical school. In the end, he went to Grenada—just in time for the United States invasion. ("The local kids were throwing rocks at us, but we got to meet General Schwarzkopf.") Although he went on to an internship and residency in Mobile, Alabama, and a fellowship at Boston University, he had long since ceased to be a wunderkind. In 1992, when he was offered a job in rural Kentucky, he took it.

In Alabama, he had overheard a conversation that would change the course of his life. He was watching Frank Bastian, a neuropathologist who has suggested that corkscrew-shaped organisms called spiroplasma cause C.J.D., dissect the brain of a C.J.D. patient. "Bastian turned to his resident and asked him what kind of history the patient had," Weisman remembers. "Was he a farmer or a factory worker? Did he eat sheep brains, cow brains, or pig brains?" When he got to the last question, the resident answered, Yes, the patient ate squirrel brains.

Today, relaxing on a terrace overlooking the Ohio River, Weisman seems to have settled into Kentucky quite nicely. He has long black hair that is fashionably unkempt, and a stocky and sunburned body. While jazz fusion pulses

THE WILD

First sight of water through trees
glimpsed as a child
and the smell of the lake then
on the mountain
how long it has lasted
whole and unmoved and without words
the sound native to a great bell
never leaving it

paw in the air
guide
ancient curlew not recorded
flying at night into
the age of night
sail sailing in the dark

so the sound of it
still crosses the years
through death after death
and the burnings the departures
the absences
carrying its own
song inside it

of bright water

—*W. S. Merwin*

from massive speakers behind us, he pads around barefoot, in khakis and a striped cotton shirt, open halfway down his chest. "I don't know if you know, but neurologists don't usually live like this," he says, gesturing back at a swimming pool and the spacious deck, a two-story house with skylit cathedral ceilings and a mantelpiece hung with an English foxhunting scene. "In New York, guys like me usually have one-bedroom apartments."

Yet this house, breezy and sunlit as it seems, has become a fortress of sorts, and Weisman is under siege. Although he is a card-carrying member of the Kentucky Colonels, he has been tarred and feathered by the local press. His neighbor—an eater of squirrel brains, Weisman suspects—won't talk to him. His wife, a former Miss Kentucky contestant, is ready to move to Boston. "You aren't going to get me killed, are you?" Weisman asked, the first time I called. "I've gotten death threats, you know."

All this bitterness and innuendo, Weisman says, is a result of good medicine and bad media. It began when the other dementia patients were beginning to show up, a year or so before the mayor died. The mayor had mentioned that he liked to eat squirrel brains, which had reminded Weisman of Frank Bastian's C.J.D. patient in Alabama. When Weisman mentioned this connection to his colleague Joseph Berger, the chairman of the Neurology Department at the University of Kentucky Medical Center, in Lexington, it immediately struck a chord. Berger had seen a patient from Kentucky in the late nineteen-eighties, he said. That man had eaten squirrel brains, too.

Over the next few months, Weisman went through his C.J.D. records and conducted a small survey. Out of a hundred local people, he found twenty-seven who had eaten squirrel brains. (In fact, more than three million people hunt squirrels in America, and in Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee alone twenty-five million squirrels are killed every year.) If the squirrel-brain connection was real, Weisman and Berger thought, there might be many more victims in the offing.

When the two neurologists published their *Lancet* letter in 1997, it drew some predictable criticism. Squirrels have never been found to carry C.J.D., some people pointed out. Besides, they eat only fruit and nuts, not each other's brains. According to Weisman, however, city squirrels "go after beef products all the time—like the suet people put out for birds." Given that C.J.D. can have a long incubation period, Weisman told the *Times*, and the fact that most of the victims in western Kentucky were elderly, "there may have been an epidemic 30 years ago in the squirrel population."

There was only one way to test the hypothesis: capture some squirrels and check them for the disease. But, even as state wildlife biologists were setting traps, the squirrel-brain story was running wild—much to the dismay of the state. It wasn't so much the threat of mad-squirrel disease that rattled Kentuckians as the hillbilly image it inspired. "Is there anything as gullible as a Yankee?" the columnist Keith Lawrence wrote in the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*. "Somebody start printing up the bumper stickers now. 'I brake for dead squirrels. Mmmm-mmmm good.'" The Kentucky *Post*, meanwhile, berated the Eastern media for their "snobbish perception that the Bluegrass State is filled with shoeless, toothless, inbred, mouth-breathing, road-kill-eating hijacks so primitive as to chow down on anything that walks, crawls or slithers." It wasn't long before Weisman's referrals began drying up.

Sitting in his sunroom, recalling the controversy, Weisman hunches his shoulders, and his features darken. He doesn't like to talk about it, he says—this is the first interview he's granted since the story came out—but the words stream out anyway, in a low embittered monotone. He alludes to anti-Semitism and says his colleagues have abandoned him. He calls parts of western Kentucky "strongholds of white supremacy" and asks if Rector is a member of the Klan. He insists that the *Times* misquoted him, that he never said that Kentuckians eat roadkill.

"How could they say I don't know anything about local culture?" he says. "My own stepdaughter was the second International Barbecue Festival

Queen!" He jabs a cigarette at a framed photograph of a young woman on the wall. Then he leaps up and leads me to the foot of the staircase, where he points out a stuffed red squirrel, slightly flea-bitten, standing there like a supplicant. "My wife bought that for me for my birthday," he says, then adds, offhandedly, "She grew up eating squirrel brains, you know."

Across the room, his wife, Beverly, sits primly on the sofa, as if patiently awaiting this revelation. When I arrived, she was wearing a T-shirt and jeans, but while Eric was talking she changed into green silk pants and a purple batik blouse. Her hair is pulled back in an elegant knot, and rouge and fresh mascara highlight her beauty-queen cheekbones and her kind, slightly asymmetrical eyes. "It's true," she says, with a half smile. "I used to go squirrel hunting with my dad when I was a little kid. The brains were kind of a kid's delicacy." She hasn't eaten them in thirty years, she adds, and she doesn't quite believe they can cause disease. But she helped Eric with his research, anyway. When the letter was published in *The Lancet*, she was listed as a co-author.

They make an odd pair, standing on opposite sides of the room: New England intellectual and Kentucky farm girl. When they met, at the regional medical center, Weisman was eager for his next move; she was an intensive-care nurse, hoping to attend medical school and travel outside Kentucky. But instead of leaving Kentucky, he opened the Neurobehavioral Institute. "The circumstances kind of set me up," Weisman says. "I had to show people that I could put down roots." And when Eric needed help, Beverly joined him as nurse, bookkeeper, and receptionist, deferring medical school indefinitely.

Every morning, Weisman reads the sports sections of the Boston *Globe* and the Boston *Herald* on-line. He watches the Red Sox whenever they're on TV, and notes the scores on sheets of paper taped to the refrigerator door. (Beverly has become a fan, too, he says.) He plays drums in his music room, travels to conferences, and keeps Kentucky at arm's length. "If I didn't have cable TV and a computer, I probably would have moved by now," he says. "But this way it's almost like I'm living in Boston. It's just easier to find a parking spot." I ask him if he ever feels isolated. No, he says, pointing his thumb across the river to Ohio. "There's the North right there."

The day's kill has been skinned and gutted, washed clean of blood clots and flies, and soaked in saltwater. Steve Rector, standing at his kitchen sink, pats the pieces dry and salts them generously, as his basset hounds, Buford and Macie, look on. They get to eat the tails but not the meat, he says, rubbing Macie's belly with his foot: "She's so fat, there's enough room in there to fit another dog."

We killed two gray squirrels and one red squirrel this morning, though two of the heads were too shot up to keep. Their limbs, glistening against the porcelain, could be mistaken for rabbit or dove but never chicken: the bones are too delicate, the flesh too dark and tightly muscled. Rector coats them in flour, then fries them in oil, using an electric skillet. When the squirrel is nicely browned on both sides, he moves the pieces to a pressure cooker. "This is the healthiest meat there is," he says, throwing a few handfuls of flour into the greasy skillet to make gravy. "It hardly has any fat or cholesterol at all." Then he adds more salt, shakes in some Kitchen Bouquet ("That's just to turn it brown"), and pours the liquid into the pressure cooker with the meat. Once the top starts jiggling, he says, it'll be done in fifteen minutes.

Girding myself for the coming meal, I try to imagine myself as John Lawson, an early American explorer whose diaries I've been reading. In 1700, when Indian guides led Lawson through the Carolina wilderness, he feasted on raccoon, opossum, and bear fat. Beaver is "sweet Food," he declared, "especially, their Tail," and skunk meat "has no manner of ill Smell, when the Bladder is out." Among the Indians, Lawson noted a meal that was in great demand: "two young Fawns, taken out of the Doe's Bellies, and boil'd in the same slimy Bags Nature had plac'd them in, and one of the Country-Hares, stew'd with the Guts in her Belly, and her Skin with the Hair on."

Squirrel meat is one of the last holdovers from those immeasurably wilder days. Until 1996, even "Joy of Cooking" had some squirrel recipes, complete with a drawing of a boot holding down a squirrel's hide as a hand reaches down to yank out the meat. But mad-cow disease and other epidemics, real and imagined, are chasing the wild game from our diet. "I can serve Chilean sea bass any day," one Southern chef told me. "But if I serve largemouth bass from a local lake the health department could shut me down." In fact, no restaurant in the country can legally serve game unless it's raised on a farm. In 1997, when "Joy of Cooking" was overhauled, the squirrel section was removed.

"I watched my grandmother eat squirrel and my mother eat squirrel, and I eat squirrel," Rector says. "But my son, he won't touch it. 'Daddy,' he says, 'that looks too much like a rat to me.' " His son is a deer hunter now, like everyone else around here. "There was a time, back in the sixties, when Kentucky didn't have any deer, and you could hunt squirrel just about anywhere," Rector says. But the coal company stripped out everything that squirrels eat—sixty thousand acres of black oak and black walnut, mulberry, dogwood, and hickory. The first thing that grew back was honeysuckle and saw brier: perfect browse for deer.

When Steve Rector and Jimmy Vincent were kids, it seemed as if the land had no limits, and its rhythms were the only clock they followed. They'd drive anywhere they wanted, split up for a few hours, and meet back at the truck when the katydids hollered. But when the deer came in local farmers got smart. "First, they started charging a dollar an acre for lettin' me hunt. Then the next year it was two, then three, then eight. Pretty soon, the deer hunters were kickin' me off the land, when I was just tryin' to shoot squirrels." Now Rector has only four places left to hunt, one of them next to the power plant where he works. But he still manages to put more than a hundred squirrels in the freezer every fall.

It's been six hours since we last ate, and for the past half hour we've been enveloped by the smell of frying meat. Perhaps that explains why I'm suddenly more open to the thought of consuming rodent. "I was watchin' the Discovery channel the other day, and it was sayin' rat is a delicacy in some places," Rector says, emptying the contents of the pressure cooker onto a plate. "It's just a different concept. It's like we look at a cow and think that's somethin' you eat, and we look at a horse and say that's somethin' you ride. But a horse probably tastes even better than a cow."

I hesitate for a second, staring at the creamy mass of jumbled limbs. But when I take my first bite the meat is tender and its taste uncomplicated—sweeter and richer than rabbit, I think, although it's hard to tell through the Kitchen Bouquet. By the time Rector reaches for the single head, I almost envy him.

"Here's how you eat one of these," he says, lifting the skull up with his fingertips. Seen in profile, it looks like the head of a monstrous ant: streamlined and mechanical, with buckteeth, and incisors curving down the sides like whiskers. First, Rector nibbles off the neck meat, then the cheeks, then he pulls off the lower jaw and plucks out the grayish-blue tongue. When all that's left is the braincase, he picks up a teaspoon and smacks it down smartly on top.

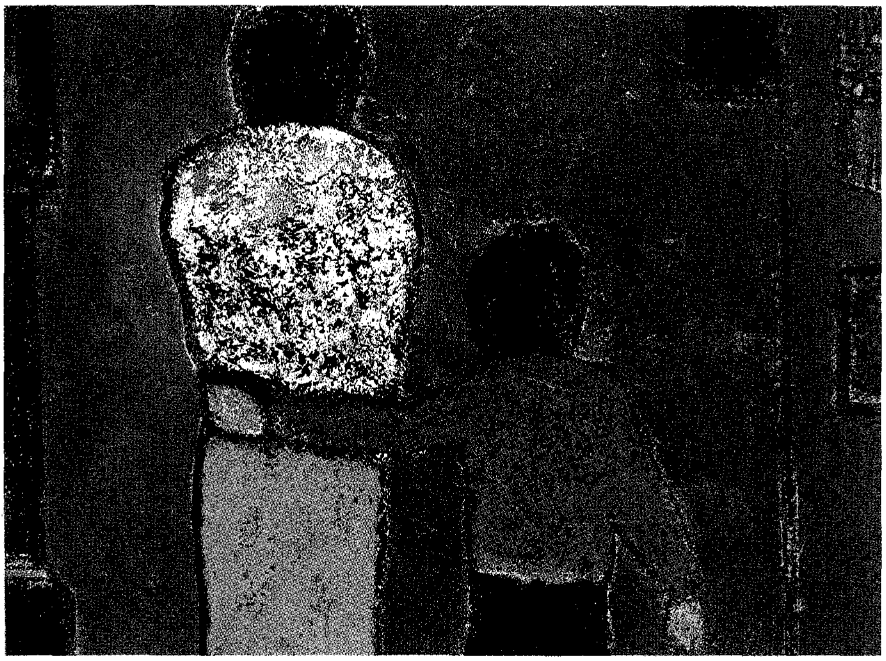
Inside, beneath the eggshell-thin surface, lies a pink organ about as large as the first joint of my index finger, stained inky black between its lobes. If some infectious agent lurks there, no pressure cooker could have killed it: brain tissue from a mad cow can pass on the disease even after baking in a seven-hundred-degree oven. "Ya want some?" Rector asks, holding the glistening brain toward me. Before I can answer, he pops it into his mouth. "Too late," he says.

Late one morning, after another few hours of hunting, I head for Louisville and Lexington, leaving western Kentucky behind. The clock jumps forward an hour as I drive east, but as small town gives way to cityscape it feels like a millennium or two have passed.

"Let me give you a sense of the culture shock," Joseph Berger tells me later, reclining in his office high above the University of Kentucky Medical Center campus. "When we first moved here from Miami, my wife went to our little grocery store and asked the proprietor if he had any Danishes. 'Ma'am,' he told her, 'we don't have Finnish, we don't have Swedish, we don't have Norwegian, and we certainly don't have Danish. But if you'd like a Twinkie it's over there.' " Pointing toward an imaginary counter, Berger bursts into an infectious giggle, his small round face and dark-brown eyes turning impish.

Berger grew up outside Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He has spent most of his medical career on the East Coast, first in

TAKES



RICHARD MERKIN

My mother's sisters and my father's sisters and my grandmother all watched over us. If they hadn't, I don't know what would have become of us, in that sad house, where nothing ever changed, where life had come to a standstill. My father was all but undone by my mother's death. In the evening after supper he walked the floor and I walked with him, with my arm around his waist. I was ten years old. He would walk from the living room into the front hall, then, turning, past the grandfather's clock and on into the library, and from the library into the living room. Or he would walk from the library into the dining room and then into the living room by another doorway, and back to the front hall. Because he didn't say anything, I didn't either. I only tried to sense, as he was about to turn, which room he was going to next so we wouldn't bump into each other. His eyes were focussed on things not in those rooms, and his face was the color of ashes. From conversations that had taken place in front of me I knew he was tormented by the belief that he was responsible for what had happened. If he had only taken this or that precaution . . . It wasn't true, any of it.

—*William Maxwell*
"So Long, See You Tomorrow" (Fiction),
October 1, 1979

"Ask the judge whether we can find the defendant not guilty and still execute him."

• •

Philadelphia, where he attended medical school, then in Florida, where for fourteen years he was a professor of neurology at the University of Miami. When he got the offer from the University of Kentucky, he says, he had to find Kentucky on a map, but the chairmanship of a department was too good to turn down.

In Florida, Berger had been the medical director of the Creutzfeldt-Jakob Foundation and had seen more than twenty cases of C.J.D. The squirrel-brain study was just an accident of circumstance, it seems—a spinoff from an old interest colliding with new surroundings. "In putting this letter together for *The Lancet*, I did it almost tongue-in-cheek," he says. "Had I known how prevalent squirrel consumption was, and how volatile the issue would be, I probably wouldn't have bothered to report it."

Berger's ambivalence is understandable, if a bit convenient. Since his and Weisman's letter was published, only one other squirrel-brain eater in Kentucky has been found to carry C.J.D. In 1998, the state Department of Fish and Wildlife killed almost fifty squirrels in western Kentucky, but by then fears of C.J.D. infection in the state were so widespread that lab technicians refused to autopsy them. Frank Bastian, the C.J.D. expert in Alabama, eventually agreed to examine the Kentucky squirrels at his lab. He has found no evidence of disease in their brains as yet: no spongelike holes, no profusion of astroglial cells.

Weisman points out that fifty squirrels are hardly a representative sample. "Even if you are looking at the right squirrels, you might still miss it," he says. "What are you supposed to look for? No one has ever seen mad-squirrel disease before." Bastian agrees. Until he searches the brains for prions and spiroplasma, he says, the negative autopsies "don't mean anything at all."

But when I repeated Bastian's comment to Ermias Belay, an epidemiologist in charge of C.J.D. studies at the Centers for Disease Control, in Atlanta, he let out a long, low chuckle. "Well, it means something to me," he said. After the *Lancet* letter appeared, Belay remembers, he called the Kentucky Department of Health to check the state's C.J.D. rate. "It wasn't a hell of a lot different from other states'," he says. "That doesn't rule it out, but you might expect it to be higher." Next, he called a squirrel expert, who told him that squirrels live fewer than five years on average, making them poor candidates for a slow-incubating disease like C.J.D. Finally, he took a closer look at Berger and Weisman's material.

It's hard enough to tease apart cause and coincidence for most disease clusters, Belay says, but for C.J.D. it's almost impossible. "What does it matter if you have two cases in the same neighborhood, when you know that they probably contracted the disease twenty or thirty years ago, when they lived in different states?" The *Lancet* study blundered blithely into such statistical pitfalls. Berger and Weisman hardly examined the countless other common traits that surely connected their five C.J.D. patients. Squirrel-brain eating seemed so exotic, so reminiscent of what caused mad-cow disease, that they felt compelled to single it out. And yet, if their surveys were representative, then more than a million Kentuckians have eaten squirrel brains at some point in their lives. Fewer than that, Belay points out, have green eyes. "If those same C.J.D. cases all had green eyes, would you then say that green eyes are associated with C.J.D.?"

Weisman remains unswayed by such arguments. "All I know is everyone with C.J.D. that I saw ate squirrels," he says. "And not that many people eat squirrels and not that many people have C.J.D." But Berger has long since parted company with him. The risk of getting C.J.D. from squirrel brains is "vanishingly small," he now says. If a squirrel brain were offered him, he would probably decline it. "But if you feel funny refusing it go ahead and eat the damn thing."

As for Belay, he is less concerned about C.J.D. from squirrels than C.J.D. from deer (though even that doesn't appear to worry him much). In southeastern Wyoming and north-central Colorado, deer and elk have been found to carry a form of the disease known as "chronic-wasting disease," and many more Americans eat venison than squirrel brains. A few deer hunters have contracted C.J.D., and the *Times* ran a story on the topic, but Letterman and Leno never got around to working mad deer into their monologues. Perhaps they'd eaten some venison lately. Deadly diseases are never quite as funny when you might get them yourself.

These days, the epidemic of epidemic stories seems to be dying down, and even mad-cow disease appears to be tapering off: only ten new human cases were reported in Britain in 1999, and only sixteen hundred cows were afflicted—down from around six thousand in 1997. *The Lancet*, for its part, is unlikely to publish a followup letter about squirrel brains, much less a retraction. "It's very hard, in science, to prove that something never existed," Belay says. "And when you do people are not usually interested."

Kentuckians, in any case, have long since made up their own minds. A year after the controversy erupted, Rector gave a squirrel-cooking demonstration at the Kentucky Folklife Festival, in Frankfort. When he was done, he says, a local health inspector had to shoo people away to prevent them from having a taste. "One elderly lady came up to me afterward," Rector remembers. "'If I can't eat this squirrel,' she said, 'can I just take this biscuit and dip it in the gravy?'"

A year later, at the same festival, I wait under an open tent for Rector to demonstrate his guitar playing. Up and down the mall of the state capital, quiltmakers, basket weavers, and wood whittlers are earnestly expounding their craft. Coal miners, on the Narrative Stage, are telling stories from underground, and cooks, in the Foodways Area, are stirring an enormous kettle of burgoo—the Kentucky state dish—a hearty stew that was long made with squirrel meat. The whole scene is both authentic and deeply contrived, edifying and dispiritingly predictable.

When Rector shambles onstage for the day's last session, he doesn't seem to notice that the tent is almost empty. Though the festival guide calls him "a key figure in the music of his region," Rector knows by now that his style is too eclectic for the average folk fan. Settling slowly onto a small folding chair, like a walrus balancing on a rubber ball, he places an acoustic guitar on his knee and silently fingers the frets. He talks awhile about his teacher Mose Rager, who invented the thumb-picking style, and about his idols (and sometime playing partners) Merle Travis and Chet Atkins, who perfected it. Then he feathers a few harmonics, to verify his tuning, plucks a chord or two, and he's off: "Bed-Bug Blues" at full throttle.

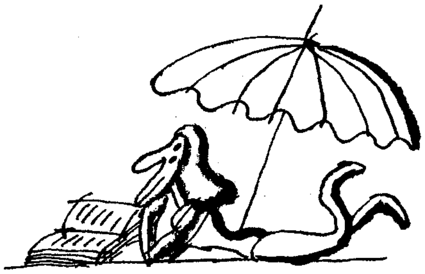
Though Rector's fingers are stubby and thick-knuckled, with nails so ragged that he has to wear paste-ons for concerts, they are as nimble as acrobats dancing on steel tightropes. As his thumb snaps the bass line and the heel of his hand thumps and dampens the soundboard, the other fingers play the melody and ornaments.

For the next forty-five minutes, his set follows an ascending curve of virtuosity. Though his eyes stay fixed on the fingerboard—out of shyness rather than necessity—a look of rising delight plays across his clenched features. "I haven't practiced this one in a while," he mumbles, and promptly seems to make a series of mistakes. Then I realize that he's really playing two songs at once: "Yankee Doodle" in the bass and "Dixie" in the treble—the perfect anthem for Kentucky, whose soldiers fought on both sides of the Civil War.

Watching Rector's fingers travel up the guitar neck, seeming to grow more confident the more difficult their position, I remember riding in his truck after our last hunt together. He'd shown me most of his childhood hangouts and hunting spots by then, but before I left he wanted me to see the Rochester Dam, the one John Prine sings about in the last stanza of "Paradise":

> When I die, let my ashes float down the Green River
> Let my soul roll on up to the Rochester Dam
> I'll be halfway to heaven with Paradise waiting
> Just five miles away from wherever I am.

Those words always reminded him of his cousin, he said. Jimmy never could get used to losing his old hunting grounds. He couldn't stand to keep going to the same small patches of forest every week, where once he'd had the whole countryside. "He just kept slippin' away," Rector said. "At one time, if he were goin' huntin' he wouldn't drink. Then he started to drink a little. Then it got to the point where he had to be drunk." After his wife left him, Jimmy twice tried to kill himself, but both times he was too delirious to succeed. He used a long-barrelled shotgun the first time and blew out part of his jaw. He aimed at his heart the next time and blasted off a piece of his shoulder. The third time, he got it right.



One by one, Rector said, his heroes had died around him: Jimmy and Merle, Mose and the guitarist Chickenhawk Murphy. "Chet's had cancer four times," he said, and recently "they took a tumor the size of a hot dog out of his brain." Now, as we drove within sight of the river, Rector admitted that he was worried for himself—and mad-squirrel disease had nothing to do with it. "My doctor tells me I've got the heart of an old man," he said, "and I've been passin' a lot of blood. They want me to get a colonoscopy, but I know how that works—you get all cut up, and then you still die."

We parked on the shore and looked out at the drought-stricken river, its sandstone ledges and muddy shallows, dark bluffs and sunken caverns exposed to the sun. Though death winds its way through every living moment—in the thickening of our arteries, the withering of our cells, and the uncertain courage of our hearts—we manage to submerge its traces almost completely. When we do confront our mortality, we distract ourselves with ever more outlandish threats—whether from Alar or aliens, fluoride, power lines, or mad squirrels.

Rector said that he might not live through the year, and his pale, possessed features showed that he meant it. But then, too, I could tell he was still riding his luck, hoping that colon cancer was just another death threat he could escape through inattention. "You know, I never did understand that line about his soul rollin' up to the Rochester Dam," he said, pointing down at the gray-green waterfall below us. "To do that, it would have to float upstream." Then he gunned the engine and turned his truck toward home. ♦

FICTION

INTERESTING WOMEN

BY ANDREA LEE

Interesting women—are we ever going to be free of them? I meet them everywhere these days, now that there is no longer such a thing as an interesting man. It's the same for all my girlfriends, whether they're in the States or in Hong Kong, where I'm now living. They come back from vacations or parties and announce proudly—with an air of defiance—that they met the most fascinating woman. What a refreshing change it would be if the new acquaintances were gorgeous lesbians or bisexuals whose intoxicating charm fed straight into hot, wet tumbles between rented sheets. Instead, these encounters are always drearily platonic. More than anything—and I speak from experience—they turn out to be schoolgirl crushes in disguise, instant friendships that last as long as it takes to swap tales of love and desperation. In short, an ephemeral traffic of souls that is about as revolutionary as flowers pressed in rice paper.

My hotel in Thailand is swarming with interesting women. I am probably one of them, though I try not to be. My husband, Simon, metallurgist and tireless *père de famille*, is presently looking over strip mines in Hunan Province, so I'm free to reinvent myself. I plan to occupy six days of Easter vacation with conspicuous idleness—no sightseeing, eating and drinking without compunction, binges of in-room movies with our twelve-year-old daughter, Basia. And, when I sit by the pool, I even bend back the cover of the book I'm reading, so no one can see that it's literature.

This hotel is the kind of place where guests read worthy books: it has, of all things, a library on the beach, where one can come in covered with sand and, under lazily revolving ceiling fans, open a glass case and consult The Oxford English Dictionary. It also has a meditation pavilion, and a high-tech gym, and bougainvillea garlands placed on the beds in the bungalows every morning; it has a view of an opalescent bay strewn with distant islands of surpassing beauty, and a chef with California leanings, plus a mad French owner who bestows on each guest a handwritten guide that mingles facts about the medieval kingdoms of Ayutthaya and Sukhothai with information like "The hotel grounds are kept secure at night by dogs trained to bark only at Thai faces."

On my third afternoon here, in a lazy moment, I fall into a conversation from which I sense that I will not be able to extricate myself without relating the usual set pieces of emotional history. I am pulling a kayak up over the sand, after a jaunt on the lagoon with Basia. She is still in her kayak, skimming around the shallow waters inside the reef, and I am huffing and puffing, scratching my feet on broken coral, and exchanging cheerful insults with her. "You're a wuss," she calls. "Go ahead, desert your only daughter!"

A slim shape emerges from the palms behind me, and I see that it belongs to a woman I have been observing idly since I arrived. I've seen her by the pool, drinking gin-and-tonics with a pair of Swiss anthropologists, husband and wife, who live in Bangladesh and are here with their adopted baby son. I eavesdropped on an emotional discussion they had about child prostitution and AIDS in Bangkok, and noted that this woman was demanding some kind of attention, not sexual, from her new acquaintances, which the couple, focussed on their gorgeous, dark-skinned baby, couldn't give. And at odd moments of the day, I have been aware of the woman sitting, not reading, in a deck chair pulled into one of the furthest clefts of the elephant-colored rocks that loom over the water. I judge her to be in her early fifties, about ten years older than I am. Looking good without pushing it, still in the game. No matronly straw hats or designer sunglasses. Over various stylish bathing suits she wears a white pareu, expertly tied, and she walks barefoot with the lounging gait that in the Far East often marks members of the great diaspora of Westerners who imagine that they are not tourists.

"Is it hard?" she asks, coming up beside me and indicating the kayak.

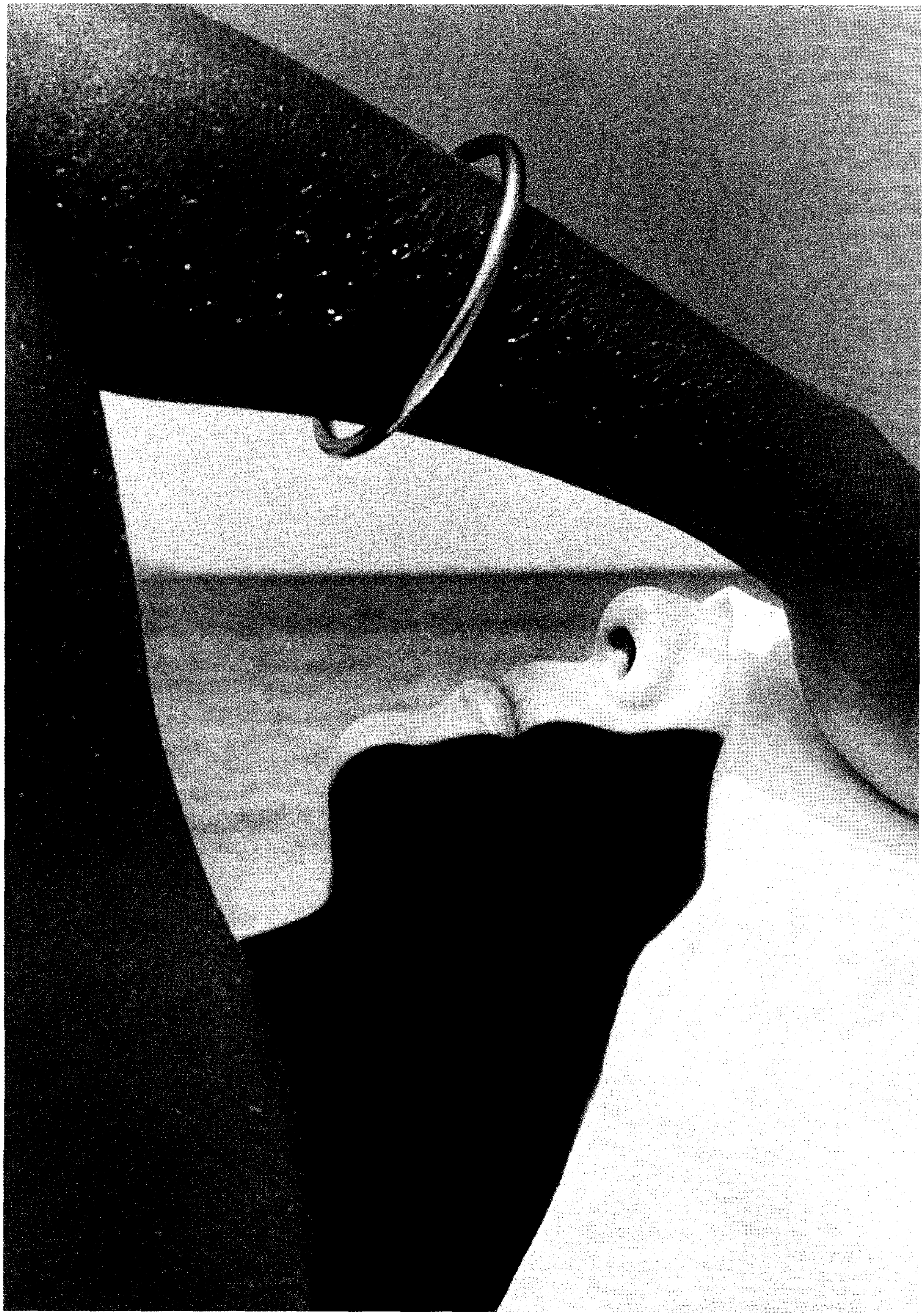
"It's easy, as long as you don't go outside the reef."

"I'll do it tomorrow. It's on my list of things that scare me." She looks at me knowingly. "I was very good at canoeing at camp," she goes on, with a sibylline smile.

An American East Coast accent. Upper-class. My brain is racing to place her more precisely: clearly Caucasian, so Jewish or Gentile? A wandering Wasp, or Irish, Italian? Camp? I imagine her at some posh backwoods establishment with secret midnight hazings and awards inscribed on birch bark. But Maine or Blue Ridge? Up close, she's a funny mix of elegance and uncouthness. Her body has a thoroughbred length of bone, but her limbs look slightly wasted—a tropical bug, perhaps, or simply borderline anorexia. Her armpits and legs are unshaven but her toenails are meticulously manicured, painted a glossy orange-red. She is wearing an Indian nose ring, and bangles around her ankles. Her hair, short and raked back from her face, is orange-red as well, the cheap, untempered henna color one sees in fakirs' beards; and her sun-weathered face with its short, arrogant nose and hooded gray eyes—no surgical work that I can discern—displays a peculiar expression of rueful good humor that reminds me of a street urchin in a thirties movie. It is amusing to see her studying me at the same time.

"Taos," she says. And everything is

RALPH GIBSON, "MARY JANE, SARDINIA" (1980)/HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY



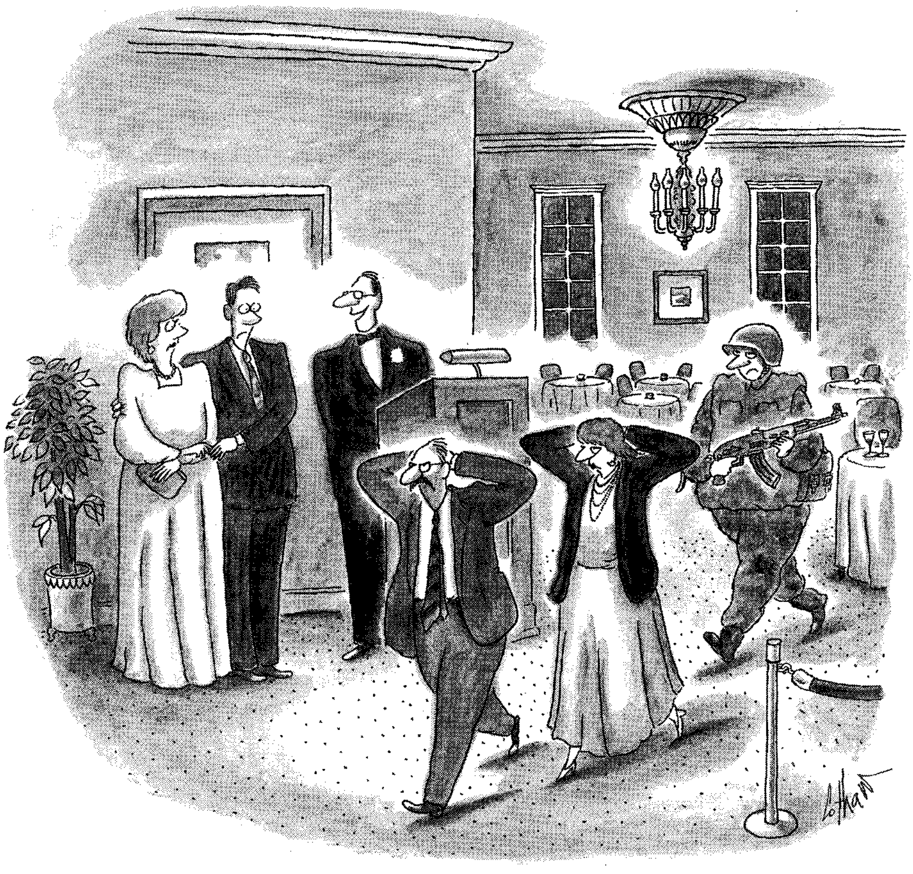
clear. Of course she wasn't born there, because no one like her is ever born in Taos; people like her are reborn there. A horsy childhood in northern New Jersey and Madrid, where her father owned chewing-gum factories, she tells me. Then twenty years as a banker's wife in London, where she ran a shop that imported South American textiles. Then the divorce and the move to New Mexico, which she initially discovered when she was "doing a Thelma and Louise" with a friend. "After all those years in England, I realized that I didn't want to be buried among the Brits. I got to Taos, and knew I could die there." Now that the kids are grown, she is travelling through the East by herself. Roughing it, mostly—she's at this pricey hotel, which fits her style but not her present budget, for a few days of R. and R. She has just finished moving from ashram to ashram in India, and was at Poona, where the faithful live on in the waning rays of the glory of the Maharishi.

We are sitting on the powdery sand, our legs stretched out into transparent water the temperature of amniotic fluid. There is too much information, I worry, moving between us too fast. But I'm on vacation, and after a while, I let myself go. Sitting there in my black bikini, the water from my hair dripping down my shoulders, I describe the fancy Santa Fe wedding I once attended, where aristocratic Florentines and Milanese, wearing spanking-new cowboy boots, boogied with Texas millionaires. I complain about the rootlessness of my life as an expatriate wife blown by multinational winds from Massachusetts to Birmingham, Warsaw, and now Hong Kong. Shamelessly, I lament the superficiality of the travel articles I write for two quite reputable magazines back in the States. Then I get to the hard stuff. Showing off to this adventurous new acquaintance with chitchat about cities and jungles we both know, I touch scornfully on the inability of men to appreciate canopic jars and shaft tombs, to deal with knavish cabdrivers, to tolerate bedbugs. I observe that women are better travellers than men, and superior beings altogether. And then I drop the word "ex-husband"—that password that functions as a secret handshake in the freemasonry of interesting women.

It is five in the afternoon, the time when it rains for ten minutes every day at this season. Steel-gray thunderheads loom over the bay and, as a long-prowed fishing boat motors hastily by, there is a distant flare of lightning under an arcade of black cloud. Basia has beached her kayak and is chasing crabs on the rocks, circling closer and closer as she eavesdrops on us. By now, we're engaged in an orgy of divorce talk, slapping away at the mosquitoes that began attacking us once the shore breeze died down. My new friend is telling me in detail exactly how the Filipina maid was bribed to testify against her. And I respond with the well-worn saga of my perfidious lawyer, a woman who, after helping arrange the official dissolution of my brief first marriage, moved in with my ex-husband. Perched above us on the rocks, Basia gives up any pretense of not listening. "You can come and sit beside us, you beautiful girl," says the woman, whose name I still don't know. She speaks to my daughter with a tender familiarity that sends a wary prickle down my spine.

I have to be careful what I say, I think, as Basia climbs down and settles near me. But it's hard. Impromptu confession can be as irresistible as sex. At least I keep my revelations rigorously in the past, and avoid the slightest spilling of guts about my second husband, Basia's father, Simon. Although at other times I can go on for hours about him and his controlling love, his occasional stupid infidelities, and his still more annoying blind devotion—revealing itself more and more over the years—to a fantasy ideal of a family. Or about my two miscarriages after Basia, and how Simon's prolonged and noisy grief left nearly no room for mine. Of none of this do I speak as I watch Basia sitting in the warm sea, her arms crossed to protect her twelve-year-old breasts, those impertinent brand-new breasts that already, I note, attract attention from old and not so old lechers around the hotel pool.

Basia is as tall as I am, and wears a larger shoe; she is one of the new, giant breed of American children created by overnurturing parents, and she has the precocious social aplomb of most expat



"Two?"

kids. She goes to an international school where kids have tongue studs and Prada running shoes and get alternating lectures on the importance of getting into the right college and of avoiding STDs. However, when it comes to matters other than sex, ambition, and controlled substances—small matters like distinguishing honest people from charlatans—Basia is still as innocent as custard pie. Now she is openly hoarding the specious information we are exchanging. And I feel a flash of alarm that changes to annoyance at her presence. Later, back at our bungalow, I will scold her unfairly, poor baby, for butting into adult conversations.

The rain comes on, cooler than the water where we are sitting. The three of us raise our arms and turn up our faces to the hard drops that rattle down as if someone were tossing handfuls of coins. Up from the lagoon, as if in response, leap entire schools of tiny silver fish. In a minute, the sun pokes through; the daily rainbow bridges two dark banks of clouds, and, on cue, a fashion shoot appears on the beach in the distance, as it does every morning and evening: photographer, dressers, models, minions, trunks and tripods and diffusers. Tonight it's the two male models in long bathing trunks: a sculptural blond with a strange, chopped haircut, and a black guy with a shaved head and a body that makes one realize that sometimes just a body is enough. "Look at that," I say.

"Don't stare at him, Mom!" begs Basia.

"Oh, he doesn't mind being stared at," says our new friend. "He's used to it. It's an element. You learn to breathe in it, and then, if you're not careful, you have to have it. It used to be part of my life," she goes on after a pause. "People turning around to look. Now that phase is over. It's not important anymore."

Basia looks so inclined to take this statement as a pearl of wisdom that I rise abruptly from the water and say that I'm chilled to the bone. I grab my reluctant daughter, and we head off to shower, leaving our new acquaintance reclining in the sea. Before departing, I introduce myself and ask her name. "Silver," she says.

"Is that your real name?" I blurt rudely.

"One of my real names." The voice drifts out of the darkness, which in tropical style has fallen like a sudden curtain.

At dinner, predictably enough, it is Basia who defends Silver while I roll my eyes over that ridiculous New Age alias. "I think she's cool," says Basia, taking a tiny spray of green peppers out of her milky soup. "She's really, really mysterious." At the tables around us, people with careful, moderate tans are wearing pale clothes and sitting over hurricane lamps whose amber glow makes the dining terrace look vaguely like a shrine. A real shrine sits nearby, under the mango tree, a tiny spirit house that is a replica of the hotel, with candles, fruit, and flowers around it. The hotel, recommended by my editor, has been a disappointment, I think: pretentious; arrogantly overpriced; hardly any kids, and none Basia's age. Instead, it's a perfect hideaway for upscale lovers: without turning around, I can count two honeymoon couples, an enamored pair of Englishmen, and a German businessman with his young mistress.

"Mysterious? Oh, please, sweetheart," I say. "She's the classic kind of woman who is very beautiful and lives for that, and then the beauty fades, and she goes and gets spiritual. Like Bianca Jagger."

"Who?"

"Bianca Jagger was one of the most beautiful women back in the seventies. Way back before you were born. Now she's not so beautiful, so she's involved in saving humanity."

"Silver doesn't want to save humanity."

"She wants to save her soul. Same difference."

Basia giggles and crunches the ice from her diet Coke. "But I thought you liked her. Why are you trashing her?"

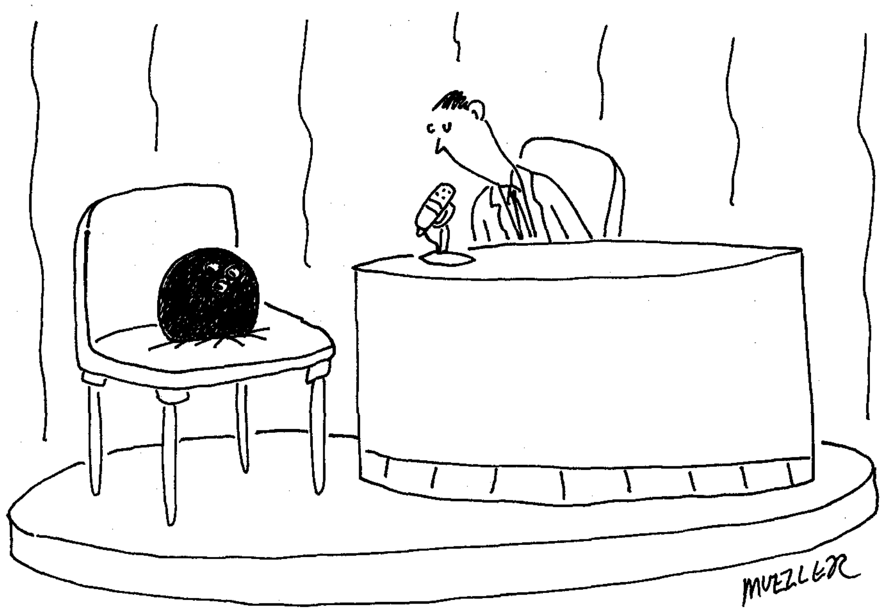
"I am not trashing her," I say untruthfully, and I wonder why I am bothering to be malicious about a woman I've just met, who seems more like than unlike me. That's it, of course. That and the fact that I revealed a great many intimate facts of my past to a complete stranger down on the beach. Why, I wonder? Am I becoming an embittered woman of a certain age, maddened at the sight of romantic couples, and driven into serial episodes of pathetic self-revelation as my daughter flowers into maidenhood? For a second, I wallow in gloomy speculation.

Basia stares across the candlelight at me. She is wearing a green tie-dyed dress and her round, seraphic face is deeply tanned, an irritating fact that reminds me of our daily battles over sunscreen and hats. It is Simon's face, but my eyes look out of it, and whenever she turns those eyes directly on me I experience an eerie jolt of total recognition. "Mom? Are you missing Daddy?" she asks.

"Not right this second," I reply, with bravado. But suddenly I do miss Simon. He would have added a bit of male ballast to the unbearable lightness of this female vacation. He would have fussed about the price of drinks and worried about hepatitis and bilharzia and insisted on renting mopeds for horrible family excursions. He'd have insisted on daily screwing at siesta time—not such a bad idea, that—and at least once he would have attempted to amuse both of his girls by turning on MTV and dancing around in a pareu, imitating Cher. He would have laughed at Silver. I take a forkful of rice and try to think of something wise and maternal to say, but Basia has stolen most of my lines. "We'll call him tonight," I mutter.

One of my weak points, as Simon continually tells me, is my incorrigible curiosity. The next morning, when I should be horizontal under a palm tree, reading my disguised literature, I agree, in a moment of wild perversity, to share a taxi into town for a morning's shopping with Silver. At breakfast, with Basia out having a half-day diving lesson, my new acquaintance looked interesting to me again.

I have misgivings already, when I have to wait in the taxi for fifteen minutes, as Silver, at the front desk, calls the States to shout endearments to her boyfriend, who, it seems, is a retired oilfield engineer. Flies swarm sociably into the rear end of the taxi, which is a rump-sprung *tuk-tuk* with aluminum seats for a dozen riders. The driver, one of the few fat Thai men I've ever seen, occasionally turns to regard me with lazy amusement. Finally Silver appears, with a crisp white Indian *kurta* pulled over



"But I'm not here to talk about bowling."

• •

her pareu, and asks me whether I mind making an extra excursion. Before she moves on to the other islands she wants to visit—Bali, Lombok, the Moluccas—there is something she wants to do here. A program of meditation and yoga coupled with high-colonic irrigation.

"Enemas! You're crazy!" I say. I say it in the downright tone of an old Methodist churchwoman.

Silver looks thoughtful. "One thing I really got to understand in India is that the body can't be separated from the spirit," she says. "You can't make any real progress toward enlightenment unless your body is clean. You don't know how much toxic stuff you've been carrying around with you for years."

And then, as the driver heads toward town, she tells me about a man she knows who did colonic irrigation and found that the encrustations in his guts had included a dozen little round pellets of metal, slightly bigger than buckshot. It turned out that when he was six he used to bite the heads off his toy soldiers, and they'd stayed with him.

"Excuse me if I'm too blunt, but the whole thing has always sounded to me like getting buggered for your health," I say. "People talk about the benefits, but why doesn't anybody talk about the erotic part of it?"

It's impossible to offend Silver. She simply smiles, rakes back her hennaed hair, revealing a narrow band of white at the roots, and shakes her head at me with a tinge of pity. Then she tells me that in Goa she heard of two places on this island, health centers where one can go on retreats for meditation and purification of both ends of the body. She wants to find them—and this, I discover, is the main purpose of our shared outing. "Come on," she says. "We can get our shopping done, and then set off and look. One of the places is over by the caves. I heard it used to be good, but the owner, a German guy, has turned into an alcoholic, and it may have gone downhill. If it doesn't look promising, we can always go find Cornelia, the American woman who runs a retreat in the bush. They say she's the best, if you can find her."

She looks at me with her urchin's smile, and I recall wondering earlier how this frail-seeming woman had managed to travel alone but unscathed through the backwaters of half of Asia. Now I see how: an exuberant opportunism protects her as absolutely as angels guard saints and children. Already I know that I'm going with her and that I'll probably get stuck with the taxi fare, too.

Silver pats my shoulder as we rattle along. "Come on. It'll be an adventure." She's astute enough not to press any spiritual points. "Cornelia went to Wellesley," she adds brightly.

In the port town, a fat, naked baby with brass anklets crawls around, laughing, on the floor of a shop that sells cheap viscose pants, sundresses, and cotton bathing suits from Bali. The baby's parents are eating noodles in the back of the shop, and keeping a weather eye on Silver, who is going through the racks of clothes and pulling out things with magisterial gestures as if she were shopping at Saks. I catch sight of a black-and-white pair of pants which I immediately know will look good, and buy them. "You move fast," Silver observes.

A pronouncement on my entire uncontemplative life. But part of my haste is due to a suspicion that I might end up paying for her purchases as well. "Yes," I say, and move on to the next shop, arranging to meet her afterward at a café on the waterfront. Wandering through a market past heaps of coriander, lichees, and jackfruit, I ponder whether I should simply escape back to the hotel in one of the many bush taxis that pass me, crammed with country people. But I'm held there by my curiosity, which seems to grow stronger in the heat, like a kind of jungle itch. I wait for Silver in the café, which looks out on two long, decayed jetties that stretch into the flat dazzle of the straits. Around me, waiting for ferries, killing time, sit golden Australian boys with dive gear and many large, ugly foreign men looking like assorted Calibans beside tiny, beautiful Thai prostitutes. A jeep pulls up and a tattooed American girl jumps out and hands around invitations to a full-moon beach party on a far island: live music, magic mushrooms. I stare out over the blazing sea that is as motionless as gelatin, and punish myself by rereading a Chinese poem I found in a book borrowed from the hotel library:

> How sad it is to be a woman!
> Nothing on earth is held so cheap.
> Boys stand leaning at the door
> Like gods fallen out of heaven.
> No one is glad when a girl is born.

Silver appears, and we get back in the taxi and race toward the first of our anal destinations. We drive along the bay, away from the stylish south of the island, where the good beaches and fancy hotels are. Soon our taxi stops in a palm grove gray with fallen, withered fronds. A large, faded signboard reads "Emerald Cave Health Spa." Below is a list: "Thai massage; Yoga Classes; Vegetarian Cuisine; Detoxification Cures; Pranotherapy; Gymnastics." Nine or ten thatched bungalows form a semicircle around a larger bungalow, and beyond gleams the incorruptible sea. After the green-velvet lawns and manicured hibiscus of the hotel where we are staying, the place looks ominously neglected.

Silver disappears into the office, and I walk down a path toward the beach. A small outdoor restaurant with white-plastic tables and chairs is deserted. A Thai woman with square-cut hair and a scowl uncharacteristic of the friendly islanders peers out at me from behind the bamboo bar, and then vanishes. Nearby, three cats are sleeping under a Ping-Pong table with a broken net, and on a deck chair outside an open-air cubicle containing a treadmill and a few barbells sits an enamelled tin bowl that once held someone's lunch and is now black with flies.

Music fills the air—a Chopin nocturne. For a minute, I think it is live, produced by the German gone to seed. But then the music shifts to Peruvian flutes, and I realize that it's a cassette, broadcast through speakers wired to the palms. A man, a Westerner, brown-haired and pasty-skinned, is snoring in a hammock at the edge of the beach. I turn and walk quietly back to the car.

Silver comes back with her hands full of papers describing what Emerald Cave can offer. On one is a list of health products with names like Hatha Purge, on another a Xeroxed diagram showing rolls of tubing and a kind of plastic-and-metal table for attaching over a toilet.

I look at it all. "Don't do this," I say to her, overturning my vow not to get involved. "At least, don't do it here."

"It's very cheap," she says stoutly. "My funds aren't what they were."

"Don't."

She looks at me as Basia does when I get tough. "Well, then, we'll go find Cornelia," she says.

Locating Cornelia involves a return to town and a stop at a bakery popular with trekkers, where we look for a notice posted on a bulletin board, and a dive with the taxi down a path into the bush past a huge, unpacific-looking water buffalo. Hours pass, as we jolt over red mud roads. All spirit of independence withers within me. Desperately thirsty, flapping my hands feebly at the mosquitoes that billow into the back of the truck at every stop, I realize that I've undergone a minor conversion to a vaguely Eastern world view: sweat and fatalism. At one point, the taxi bounces over a bridge across a vine-filled gorge where water is falling among clouds of orchids, a paradise I know I visited in dreams all through my childhood. "Please stop for a minute," I say in a faint voice, but the place is past, never to be found again in this incarnation. And we head onward toward Cornelia.

It is late afternoon, and the taxi-driver has begun to give us ominous glances over his shoulder, when we pull into a clearing in the middle of a huge palm grove. Before us is a modest concrete house with a heap of coconuts against one wall. "Island Wellness Center" is written on a small sign posted on a tree trunk. A thin, deeply tanned woman in a plum-colored leotard and a pair of loose batik pants comes out on the veranda and looks at us.

"Are you Cornelia?" calls Silver, clambering nimbly out of the truck and advancing with the triumphant air of Stanley sighting Livingstone.

The woman acknowledges her with a spare, formal nod. I instantly dislike her.

In a matter of minutes, Silver and Cornelia have clasped hands like long-lost friends, gazed into each other's eyes, and vanished into an office with screened windows, leaving me on the veranda with a portly, yellow dog, who studies me tranquilly. The reddening sun is level with the tops of the acres of palms surrounding us, and I think with a pang of Basia, who must be fretting

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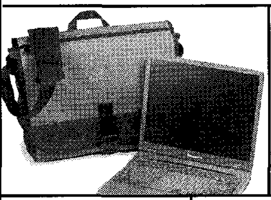

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because I've run off and left her. Beside the heap of coconuts, our driver, who has plainly given up hope of an early dinner, squats companionably to smoke with a couple of young men who drove up behind us in a truck full of gas cannisters. From inside, where the two women are sitting, comes a murmur of excited voices. The door opens and Cornelia beckons to me. "You can come in," she says, as if she were speaking to a small child.

I tiptoe inside and settle on a low rattan stool in a corner of the room beside an overflowing bookcase, where I see Castaneda's "Journey to Ixtlan," and "Back to Eden" by Jethro Kloss. More books crowd the desk where Cornelia sits, and on the wall behind her hangs a Thai anatomy chart, dense with notations in green ink.

"We do a lot of work in the sea," Cornelia is telling Silver. "Breathing and movement. You live in one of our huts down by the beach. They are very basic, of course. No hot water. You'll be fasting and doing the high colonics every morning and evening, before meditation. The results of the colonics can be amazing. People re-experience fragments of past lives."

Cornelia has a phenomenally narrow torso, and breasts with sharp nipples that show clearly through her leotard. Her frizzy, sandy hair is dusted with gray. She has a penetrating voice, and a look in her pale eyes which I recognize as subtle orneriness. She, I see immediately, is another interesting woman. She has already made it clear that she speaks fluent Thai, and has given a quick, disdainful sketch of her rejected past life, not omitting Wellesley.

Silver is staring at her, bedazzled. I feel a pang of the kind of jealousy I haven't felt since Girl Scouts, when my troop leader—one of those dear, old-fashioned closet lesbians—liked my best friend better than me. Just yesterday Silver was staring at me like that as I rattled on about my ex-husband's shenanigans and the rigors of a writer's life. Evidently I wasn't ethereal enough for her. And besides, getting a taste for these chaste female encounters can lead to incredible promiscuity. Another day, another soul laid bare.

I clear my throat and announce—philistine that I am—that I have to get back to the hotel, and Silver and Cornelia wince with annoyance. They agree that Silver will begin her cure in a day's time, and then they embrace.

"I think you are absolutely beautiful," says Cornelia to Silver.

"You are exactly what I have been looking for," says Silver to Cornelia.

Silver and I ride back to our hotel in silence and arrive there at dusk, just in time to view the underlings of the fashion shoot trudging up from the beach lugging equipment and screens with the weary air of peons returning from the fields. I pay the entire taxi fare without a murmur and run to find Basia. She is lolling under the mosquito net in our bungalow, watching MTV broadcast from Kuala Lumpur and finishing the last of the forbidden M & Ms from the minibar. She is so happy to see me that she forgets her twelve-year-old's dignity and jumps up and hugs me like a much younger child. "I thought you'd never

---

MAN MAKING THE BED

Psalm after psalm into a dead sea of silence: they invent
their own enormous, endangered day. Scalded, lord,
by sunlight, and the lizards watching, licking dust,

he unfolds the fresh sheets: brisk sniff of laundry, white
as a field of Queen Anne's lace. The word "linen" comes
to rest, a cleansing breath, and a big sail bellies in the breeze

he conjures, speaking its memory of flax and water, acres
of raw linen in the Low Countries or the black North
laid out like a waiting canvas, a picture-glimpse of heaven

with a few shriven women's bodies adrift in it, dazzled
by its dear, old-world, breathing spaces. He billows the sheet
and a wondercloud swells in this small room, a huge

snow-ruffle drifting down, a tabernacle of cool white rising
in the desert. Here is the bed new made, and here its
play of flesh and spirit, unsettling themselves in bodies.

He is alone here making the bed up, stopped between
the solidity of things as they are and the huge white peace
of the sheet-sail flapping from his hands for a matter

of seconds and subsiding, spread flat, its corners pointed
towards where she leans—half-dressed in memory,
one soft stroke of daylight streaking her spine—

to draw taut the sheet he's holding the other side of
and they snap together, lay it flat, tug it tight together
in what looks like a fullness of time and truth and not

plummeting asunder. Lying alone between the sheets
tonight, feeling the clean of them, their white arms
tight about him, he will dream a wilderness of tents

in moonlight: asleep, they will be shivering a little,
as if they felt the stars press their own chill rivets in
or the future with red eyes whispering to rouse them.

—*Eamon Grennan*

come back!" she tells me. "I thought I was going to be stuck watching 'An Evening with Aerosmith'!"

Her mouth drops open when I describe Silver's quest. "Oh God, Mom—you mean she's going around looking for places to get her ass washed out?"

"Don't use crude words to show off," I say coldly. "And it's her colon, really."

"It's still her butt. Remember that joke: Are there rings around Uranus? Is there intelligent life on Uranus?"

We look at each other and snicker. Then I tell her about the man who swallowed the heads of toy soldiers and we collapse on the bed and sob with laughter. We're still laughing on our way to dinner. Outside the dining room, Basia stops to inspect the spirit house as she always does, touching with the tip of one finger the minute plastic figures set inside it and the fresh offerings of fruit and flowers around them. On our first night at the hotel she read aloud to me from the guidebook a passage explaining that these tiny houses are set up for wandering guardian spirits. In the light of the candles set on the miniature carved veranda, Basia half resembles a little girl looking over her dolls, and half—with her flimsy dress, tumbled hair, and glowing sunburn—a nymphet in a romantic soft-porn photo. A familiar wave of emotion sweeps over me, an even mixture of tenderness, envy, and general terror of the future. At the same time, I wonder how I could have left this angel even for an hour for such a poor substitute as Silver. It occurs to me, as it often does, that I am supposed to be setting an example for Basia. And what a cockup I make of it, sometimes.

Basia turns away from the little house and looks over at the lamp-lit diners at the restaurant tables. "I'm still thinking about those toy soldiers," she says in a dreamy voice. "I wonder what Silver will find." A pause and a giggle. "I wonder what *you* would find."

Next day, I keep to myself, as one is entitled to do in a hotel that has a library. When Simon calls from Hunan, before breakfast, I don't say a word about my daylong excursion but instead wax lyrical on the joys of solitude until, through the crackling Chinese static, he asks me suspiciously what I've been up to. "Just the usual sex with hotel waiters," I tell him.

From my lounge chair in the shade beside the pool, I observe Silver's movements on the last day before her retreat. After bidding me a cheerful good morning, she breakfasts garrulously with the assistant manager, who dreams of opening a luxury hotel in Rangoon; she meditates on the rocks by the bay; and by late afternoon she is one of three torsos emerging from the water at the far end of the pool, drinking cocktails with the black male model and one of the stylists from the shoot. When she sees me watching, she holds up her glass. "The last gin-and-tonic!" she calls. "*Vive la folie!*"

I don't see Silver again. She goes off to Cornelia and a cleaner life without saying goodbye. Once or twice, she drifts through my thoughts in her white sarong with her cocky grin. But almost immediately I banish her, and for the last part of my vacation I set about being indolent and uninteresting.

Still, it happens that on the day before I leave I find myself in the library, deep in conversation with a woman I have just met. She is younger than I am, twenty-eight or twenty-nine, and English: blond, with a pudgy, tanned body packed into a girlish bikini; entertainingly foulmouthed, with a Geordie accent. She came to the hotel a couple of days ago, with a tall Jordanian husband covered in gold chains; two blond, black-eyed toddlers; and a pair of male attendants in white robes and Arab headdresses, who carried suitcases and looked after the children, even changing diapers. Leaning on a table covered with weeks-old foreign papers in the dim, low-ceilinged library, she looks at me and says, "I envy you, being practically alone on holiday. Sometimes I get so fucking sick of the lot of them—"

Mice scurry in the palm thatch on the roof. The Oxford English Dictionary looms behind us, in its glass case, locked away against the ravages of suntan oil and salt air. Across the room, Basia, reading *MAD* magazine in a varnished planter's chair, has stopped turning the pages. In the woman's surly blue eyes I can see skeins of experience poised to unwind, and the password trembles on my lips. ♦

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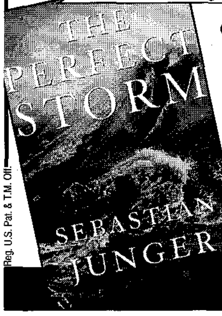

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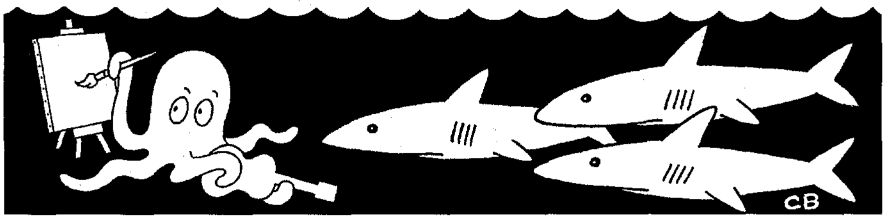


BOOKS

FIRE IN THE BIG TOP

An American tragedy in wartime Hartford, Connecticut.

BY JOHN GREGORY DUNNE

The fire that consumed the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus in Hartford, Connecticut, on July 6, 1944, was one of the worst American disasters, a catastrophe that claimed a hundred and sixty-eight lives, the same number of people killed in 1995 when Timothy McVeigh blew up the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. It is also one of the least documented. Disaster literature is a flourishing genre, offering its practitioners a pulpit from which to pontificate on the interrelation of man, nature, and ideas while rutting in the muck of ugly and unnecessary death, but the circus fire fell into no general narrative about which parables could be drawn or villainy ascribed. It was a local story whose most resonant appeal was its hideousness. And it had the misfortune of occurring at a historical juncture when the hideous was commonplace, and a hundred and sixty-eight dead seemed a paltry figure. On the front page of the next day's New York *Times*, the fire was the off-lead; the top story, under a five-column headline, was Winston Churchill's announcement that 2,752 people had died in London in a barrage of pilotless German V-1 robot bombs.

The brute momentum of the war did not encourage extended preoccupation with a domestic event. In Normandy, the United States First Army was slogging through the hedgerows, field by field. London was battered by German buzz bombs, and on the eastern front Russian troops pushed into Poland and Lithuania. In the Pacific, B-29 Superfortresses, based in China, bombed the Japanese island of Kyushu, and on Saipan, in the Marianas chain, marines were mopping up after a bloody campaign that brought the war another step closer to what was code-named Operation Olympic—an invasion of Japan. At home, the demands of fighting a two-ocean war had so drained the manpower pool that, even with eleven million men under arms, eighteen-year-olds were being drafted before completing high school; my older brother, Dominick, called Nick by the family, attended summer school in 1943 so that he might graduate early and get his diploma before heading to basic training.

Hartford was a regular stop for the Ringling Brothers circus. Known as the Insurance Capital of America, the city was socially bifurcated between the Protestants, who owned and ran the insurance companies, the banks, and their ancillary law firms, and the Irish, who ran the city's services and politics. The Irish Catholics of my parents' generation, no matter how affluent, did not socialize with Protestants, or "Yanks," as the Irish invariably called them. ("Wasp" belongs to the sanitized diction of pop anthropology.) The city's two most prominent personages were a poet who abhorred attention and a prizefighter who didn't. The poet was Wallace Stevens, who in his day job was a vice-president at an insurance company, where few if any of his colleagues were familiar with "If her horny feet protrude, they come / To show how cold she is, and dumb. / Let the lamp affix its beam / The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream." The prizefighter was Guglielmo Papaleo, who, as Willie Pep, beat Chalky Wright for the featherweight championship in 1942, and was rarely seen around town not in the company of the kind of woman that used to be called a blond bombshell.

The Hartford Senators easily won the Class A Eastern League pennant that summer, behind a left-handed pitcher named Pete Naktenis, who in the nineteen-thirties had a cup of coffee in the major leagues with both the Cincinnati Reds and the Philadelphia A's; as a war worker, frozen in his factory job, he could pitch only at home, at Bulkeley Stadium in the South End, but he still won eighteen games. Hartford's defense industries ran three shifts a day, seven days a week, manufacturing everything from aircraft engines to ball bearings and small arms. So many people were working in the factories that the city's population had mushroomed beyond its housing capacity, and social workers worried about the rise in prostitution and venereal disease. Residents rented out sheds, garages, and spare rooms; lodgers on different shifts often split the cost of a single room. Although the chance of a Luftwaffe air raid on the war plants was virtually nonexistent, the city was ringed by Army anti-aircraft batteries and searchlight companies, giving it what seems in retrospect a spurious sense of being in harm's way.

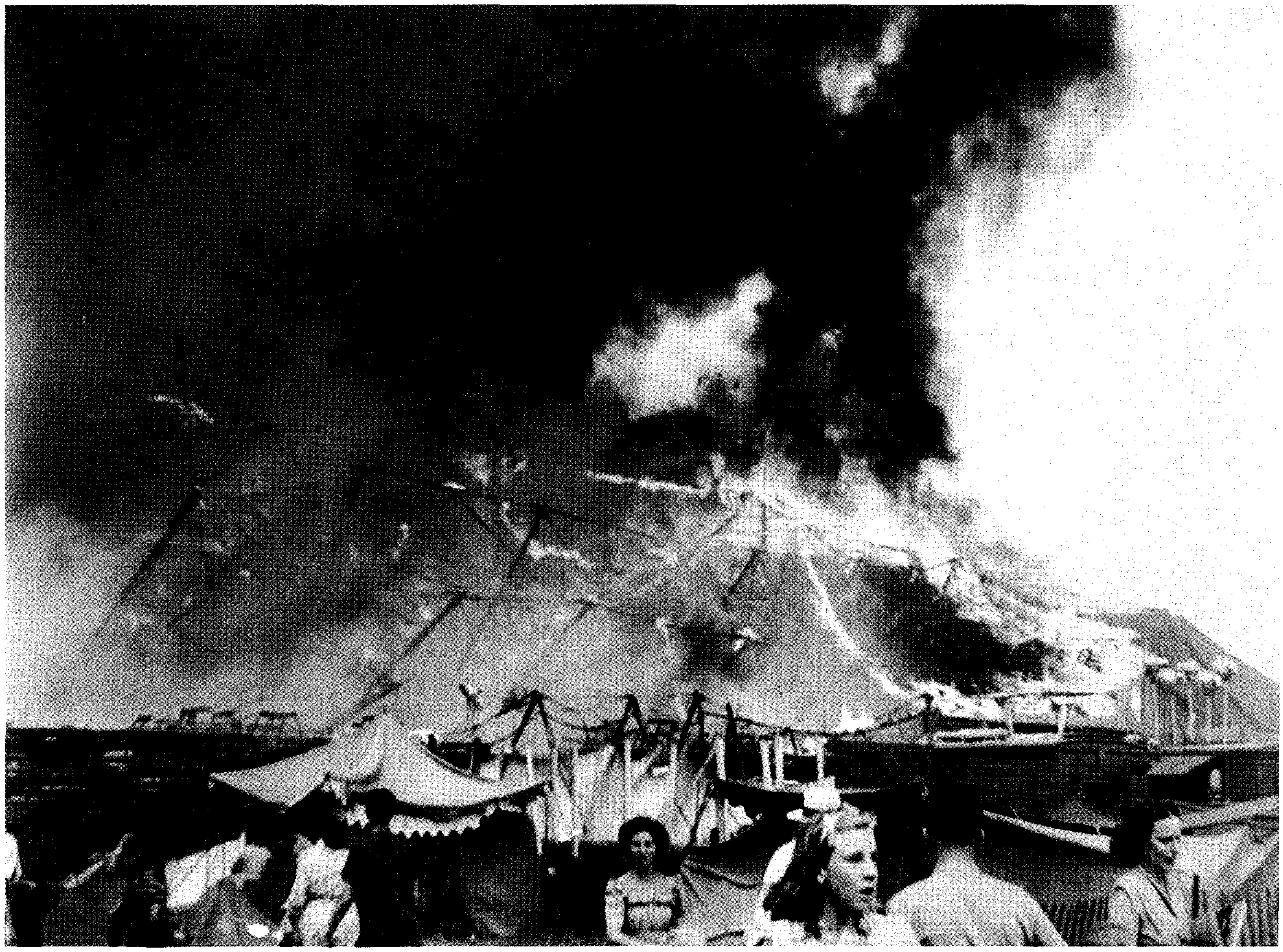
Shortly before 10 A.M. on July 5, 1944, the circus's red-and-gold railroad cars, carrying seventy thousand tons of equipment, as well as roustabouts, spielers, performers, and sideshow acts (the Living Skeleton, the Fire Proof Man, the Rubber-Armed Man, Baby Thelma the fat girl, Rasmus Neilson the tattooed strongman, midgets, clowns, and sword swallowers), plus a menagerie of snakes, monkeys, camels, gorillas, zebras, big cats, and fifty elephants, rolled onto a Hartford siding. The train was five hours late, causing the cancellation of that afternoon's matinée. For circus people, blowing a show is bad luck.

The Big Top, the circus's main tent, was new that year, and publicists claimed that it was the largest in the world—five hundred and fifty feet long by two hundred and twenty feet wide, and soaring at its highest point to forty-eight feet. Posters promised "The World's Biggest Menagerie." Gargantua, the giant gorilla, billed as "The World's Most Terrifying Living Creature," lolled in a new glass-enclosed, air-conditioned cage that prevented him from practicing the stunt he had perfected in his old open-barred cage: peeing in his hand and hurling the urine at people on the midway. The Flying Wallendas were the circus world's most electrifying aerialists, and Emmett Kelly its most famous clown, his sad-eyed hobo an implicit homage to Charlie Chaplin's Little Tramp. The war, however, had decimated the Big Top. Where once a full crew comprised nine hundred and sixty workers, there were only six hundred and seventy available for that summer's tour, and aircraft plants had even conscripted a number of circus midgets because they could fit into tight spaces on assembly lines.

As it had for ten years, the show set up on Barbour Street, in Hartford's solidly Italian blue-collar North End. It had not rained in days; the weather was oppressively hot. Roughnecks laid out the canvas sections of the Big Top and laced them together, and then elephants hauled the strips to the top of the center poles. Although fire-resistant tents were available, Ringling Brothers chose not to use them, because they were heavier and required a longer time and more workers to assemble.

Fire, however, had been a blight on America's circuses since 1799, when the amphitheatre for an equestrian show burned to the ground in Philadelphia. In August, 1942, Ringling's menagerie tent caught fire before a matinée in Cleveland. No spectators were killed, but the toll in show animals was devastating—four elephants, thirteen camels, nine zebras, five lions, two tigers, two gnus, two white fallow deer, one axis deer, one puma, one chimpanzee, and one ostrich; the fire was put out in less than twenty minutes, but the heat was such that it peeled the hides completely off the four elephants, two of whom had to be shot by local security, as did a puma, three camels, and three of the lions. The reason the tent in Cleveland burned so fast was that it was waterproofed, as it had been for years, with a cheap and combustible mixture of white gasoline and paraffin (the Big Top alone was coated with six thousand gallons of white gasoline and eighteen hundred pounds of paraffin).

Four months after the Cleveland fire, a calamitous fire incinerated Boston's Cocoanut Grove night club in just seven minutes. The blaze killed nearly five hundred people, mainly because they could not fight their way through the club's doors, many of which turned inward; most of the victims were asphyxiated by toxic chemicals in the club's furnishings. In the aftermath of the Cocoanut Grove fire, the doctor who



The Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, Hartford, July 6, 1944. One hundred and sixty-eight people died.

CULVER PICTURES

"Mr. Tilson will suffer you gladly now."

• •

coördinated Hartford's emergency disaster plans, which had been set up after Pearl Harbor, took a medical team to Massachusetts General Hospital, in Boston, to study fire-emergency procedures, and when the team returned he set up a burns committee in case Hartford was ever visited by a similar conflagration.

Which it was, less than two years later.

Stewart O'Nan's "The Circus Fire" (Doubleday; $24.95) is the first book-length study of the tragedy under the Big Top. The fire's victims were almost all women and children; since the fire broke out at a matinée, and since absenteeism was not countenanced in the government-regulated defense industry, fewer than twenty of the dead were males over the age of fifteen. A close reading of the casualty lists showed a heavy concentration of first- and second-generation European immigrants—Lithuanian, Russian, Romanian, Polish, Greek, Hungarian, and Italian—drawn to Hartford by the availability of war work. There was not a single loss to asphyxiation; the dead were either burned to death or fatally trampled in a mad rush for the exits. Death certificate after death certificate, O'Nan says, read, "Fourth-degree burns, trauma to head and torso, or a combination of the two." The heat was so intense that "it literally cooked people." Body fat burned like gasoline, and many of the dead were reduced to "gelatin" or "black Jell-O." Scorched disconnected limbs littered the ashes as if they were embers. The skull of one boy, O'Nan writes, was cracked "like a boiled egg left too long in the pot, his brain sticking through the fissures." Fire had sucked the eyes from a woman in her fifties and burned off her right forearm; the heat had also annealed to her stomach the three-year-old girl she was carrying.

After a few initial, and largely unsatisfactory, hearings, there was little serious examination of the blaze for nearly forty years. How the fire started and who or what might have been culpable were questions that remained unanswered. Then, there was the matter of the unclaimed. Six of them were buried in a common plot memorialized later by a concrete wreath installed by the city. It carried the words "A Resting Place for Three Adults and Three Children Who Lost Their Lives in the Circus Fire, July 6, 1944, Their Identity Known but to God." The most intriguing and enigmatic of these six was No. 1565 (each victim was given a number until identity was positively established), a girl not quite four feet tall whose age was variously estimated at between five and eight. Unlike the others, who were essentially charred ruins, No. 1565 was virtually unburned. There was no rictus of fear, no sense of terror, in her face. Incredibly, however, no one stepped forward to identify her—no relative, no neighbor, no teacher, no clergyman, no friend. As the years passed, she became "Little Miss 1565" in the public consciousness, a subject of "lest we forget" news features on the anniversary of the fire. Rumors attached themselves to her: she was the illegitimate daughter of a prominent family; her mother had died in the fire at the precise moment her father was killed in combat; she was a runaway child; she was a pawn in a parental custody battle; and, most baroquely, she was a midget.

The paucity of information about the fire was especially perplexing to me because I am an interested party. My younger brother, Stephen, who was eight, was at the circus that day, along with two friends, Ted and David Johnson, seven and five, respectively, the three of them under the watchful eye of the Johnsons' widowed mother, Marion. My father was chief of the surgical service at St. Francis Hospital, where dozens of the injured and dying were sent, and he was on emergency duty deep into that evening. My brother Nick was home on post-basic-training leave before shipping out to France and the war; Nick, only eighteen, spent much of that afternoon driving Marion Johnson from hospital to hospital as she searched for her son Ted, who had become separated from her in the panic inside the Big Top. That Ted might be dead went unspoken. While my mother waited inside by the telephone, I played catch with myself in the side yard at my house: bounce a tennis ball off the chimney, catch it in my baseball glove, throw it again, and try not to listen to the distant symphony of sirens in the background.

In the early nineteen-eighties, Lieutenant Rick Davey, a Hartford Fire Department arson investigator born four years after the Big Top turned into ashes, began assembling a dossier on the case from documents long forgotten in various state institutions; the questions about that day obsessed him, especially the reason that Little Miss 1565 had remained unidentified for four decades. In late 1990, Davey shared his material with Lynne Tuohy, a reporter who covered criminal justice for the Hartford *Courant*. Tuohy spent four months plowing through cartons of old photographs and yellowing official reports, and interviewing survivors, the youngest well into middle age, the oldest at death's door; she also got in touch with their families, the families of the dead, and the network of rescuers, volunteers, clergy, bureaucrats, and medical professionals with the ability still to recall. The result of her endeavors was an extraordinary eleven-thousand-word investigation in *Northeast*, the *Courant's* Sunday magazine, that brought the fire frighteningly to life as no one else previously had. Without Lt. Davey's obsession and Ms. Tuohy's prodigious research, O'Nan might not have been moved to build on their work and fill in the remaining blanks.

By 10 A.M. on the morning of July 6th, the temperature in Hartford was already in the eighties; the heat was stifling, like a wall. When the band struck up the national anthem, at 2:23 P.M., there were eighty-seven hundred people in the Big Top. In the east cage, bears, lions, and Great Danes performed; in the west, panthers, leopards, and pumas, the animals choreographed into pyramids, their movements cueing a musical "quilt of rumbas, fox-trots, marches, cakewalks, vamps." Then the houselights dimmed, and while the animals were being herded out of the tent through their separate chutes the audience focussed on five aerialists in leotards, four of them Wallendas, high above the center ring, with three balancing poles, a chair, and two bicycles without handlebars. As Karl and Herman Wallenda placed the front wheels of their bicycles on the high wire, the band swung into the waltz from Gounod's "Faust."

It was 2:35 P.M.

At first, no one noticed the lick of flame on the tent wall nearest the main Barbour Street entrance. All eyes were on the wire. "Nearly everyone who was there that day would claim they were the first to see it," O'Nan writes. "The fire was the size of a baseball, a football, a basketball, a dishpan, a briefcase, a small window, half a tablecloth. It was circular, it was triangular, it was shaped like a horseshoe." Circus personnel moved in to contain it, throwing buckets of water at the flame as it climbed the wall toward those sections of the canvas treated with paraffin and white gasoline. Some spectators thought the blaze part of the clown act; it was a circus, after all. Ushers urged calm; it would be taken care of. On the wire, Karl Wallenda saw the commotion, and knew the situation was serious. The band stopped the Gounod waltz and began playing John Philip Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever," the circus-disaster march, a signal alerting circus people that something has gone seriously wrong. The Wallenda troupe scrambled down their rope ladders; one of the bicycles fell from the wire to the sawdust floor. "Once the fire breached the roof, the tent became a chimney, sucking cooler air in through the exits and shooting it hot out the top," O'Nan writes. "The paraffin acted as a constant accelerant; the vast area of the canvas provided an endless supply of fresh oxygen."

Marion Johnson was sitting across the oval from the spot where the fire started. She was one of my mother's closest friends, a bridge partner, and, as I remember her, a handsome, correct woman of considerable steel, a single mother before that term became a cliché. Marion glimpsed the fire, gathered her sons and my brother Stephen, and headed for an exit. An usher tried to stop her, and she told him in no uncertain terms, according to Ted Johnson, that she was leaving. Throughout the tent, panic was setting in. The path toward the exit where Marion was heading was blocked by one of the animal chutes—what Ted described to me as a "longitudinal cage." The only way over the chute was via five wooden stairs a yard wide. Several of the big cats were still in the chute, leaping, clawing, and hissing at the terrified people jamming the narrow passage overhead. As the crowd surged toward these stairs, Ted was wrenched from his mother's grasp and swallowed in the throng. Marion handed Stephen and her son David to a man on the far side of the walkway, who then pulled her across. By now, the stairs were so blocked that people were pulling themselves across the horizontal bars, oblivious of the lions snapping at them; attendants with prods tried to hold the fleeing at bay until the cats were out of the chute. It should be noted that, in contrast to Cleveland, no animals died in Hartford.

At the exit by the second animal chute, the situation was the same: adults handed children across until they were themselves overcome by the smoke and heat or crushed in the press of flesh. When the fire cooled, scores of scorched and contorted bodies were found stacked against these metal chutes. Everyone had a metaphor for the inferno: it burned like cellophane, tissue paper, a sheet of newspaper, a Roman candle; it looked like a grass fire, a haystack fire, a giant orange wave. With the exits blocked, people searched for other ways out; some lowered themselves between the seats, dropping to the circus floor, where they crawled under the tent. Others jumped from the top of the grandstand, many breaking legs and ankles; as they lay helpless on the ground, they became cushions for other jumpers. A boy with a pocketknife hacked a hole through the tent wall that became an escape route; a soft-drink vender smashed a bottle of Coca-Cola on the bleachers and used the broken edge to cut another hole through the canvas. Not everyone behaved this well. A sailor punched a woman in the jaw for blocking his way, and the brawny knocked aside the scrawny; some grabbed chairs, as Lynne Tuohy noted in her article, and swung them into the crowd "like machetes" to clear a path to an exit.

Finally, at 2:44 P.M., nine minutes after the fire was first sighted, someone turned in a fire alarm. Ten fire companies sped to Barbour Street, only to find circus elephants blocking their way. Even had the fire department been immediately on the scene, it is unlikely that it could have prevented the Big Top from becoming a charnel house; firemen first had to lay a thousand feet of hose, snaking it through the stunned and milling crowds to get to the fiery remains of the tent. The dead were everywhere, black and featureless, human in shape but often minus faces and missing hands and feet. A middle-aged man lay in the center ring, cut in half by a circus pole; nearby lay a woman on her back, her arms and legs sticking straight up, like a dead animal with rigor mortis. Paraffin had "rained down like napalm," O'Nan writes. "It sizzled as it hit the skin of children in sunsuits." Burned and dying survivors looked like human blisters, overgrown jellyfish, and sounded, said Emmett Kelly, "like beaten dogs." Kelly had been enjoying a beer when the fire broke out; still in his hobo makeup and costume, he joined the bucket brigade that was too little and too late. Inside the tent, the band's kettle drums exploded from the heat; the bandsmen stayed until the last possible moment, then, in the yard outside, their uniforms stained with soot, they continued to serenade the survivors, like the musicians on the Titanic. Firemen hosed down piles of bodies matted at the exits, cooling them off in hopes of finding someone underneath who might still be alive. A rescuer tried to pick up one body and his hand sunk into its flesh right to the bone, which was hot to the touch. The only thing left unharmed on the Big Top was the marquee that promised "The Greatest Show on Earth."

Hours earlier, Ted Johnson had found himself dazed and unharmed in the pandemonium outside the tent. "I have no memory how I got separated," he told me this spring, when we spoke at length about the fire. "I have no memory how I got out." He reckoned the time from losing his grip on Marion's hand to finding safety outside as between eight and ten minutes. Even in this chaos he retained his mother's lessons of discipline and decorum: "I was taught never to cross a street and never to accept rides from strangers." Eventually, he spoke to a policeman, who hailed a car and told the driver to take Ted where he wanted to go—to his grandmother Anna Riordan's house on Westerly Terrace, the same street where Wallace Stevens lived. Marion's sister, Rita, also lived there. Marion had already talked to Rita, asking her to go to Hartford police headquarters for the latest information, and to tell their mother nothing until they knew for sure what had happened. Anna Riordan, then, was alone at the house on Westerly Terrace when Ted arrived. Once there, he went immediately to sleep; that Marion, brother David, and Stephen might have died in the flames was for a fatherless seven-year-old a possibility too terrible to contemplate.

As the magnitude of the calamity became clear, Hartford's wartime emergency disaster plans were activated. Buses and department-store delivery trucks were dispatched to Barbour Street to serve as ambulances and hearses. The hospital nearest to the fire was Municipal, an almost Dickensian charity institution used for the city's indigents. It had no money for upkeep, its equipment was old, and there were holes in its floors. Calls went out to neighboring community hospitals for cots, stretchers, and plaster for casts. G. Fox, Hartford's top department store, sent a truckload of bedding and nightclothes, the price tags still attached. Municipal had a capacity of a hundred and forty-five beds, and that afternoon it would treat a hundred and forty-three patients, many of them critical. "People were dying in the corridors," a doctor remembered, and a nurse's aide said, "I actually scrubbed flesh off the floors in the hallways. We swept the flesh up first, then we scrubbed. . . . Even for a month afterward, you smelled the flesh."

When it became apparent that the number of dead would tax the resources of the county medical examiner, the mayor ordered a makeshift morgue set up on the drill floor of the State Armory, just west of downtown. The bodies were segregated by age and sex, and laid out on narrow cots; those in relatively good condition were placed in the front so that family members who had come to identify their loved ones would see as few of the horribly burned as possible; sixty-seven of the dead were children under the age of fifteen. Attached to each cot was a list of identifying features for the body under the sheet—estimated height and weight, jewelry, scars. Dental charts and wedding rings were used for the worst cases; silver fillings can survive even a cremation, and the melting point of the gold in a wedding ring is 1,945 degrees. One father was able to identify his daughter only by the bandage he had applied to her finger that morning; a volunteer escorting parents searching for a missing boy pulled back a blanket and saw that the child on the cot was his own son, who he had not realized had gone to the circus that day. Outside the armory, parents, grandparents, siblings, and spouses waited silently, patiently in line; occasionally a loudspeaker would blare the name of a child lost but alive at the Brown School, waiting for parents to claim him or her. Marion Johnson did not go to the armory. After my brother Nick chauffeured her to three city hospitals looking for her missing son, she went to her mother's house, where she found him.

A month later, at St. Francis Hospital, the last victim died, a fearfully burned young woman, weakened by shock and infection from skin grafts, who had turned seventeen just days before her death; her mother and younger sister had also succumbed in the flames. In the initial tally of the dead, the count was a hundred and sixty-nine victims; the bag labelled "Unidentified #1," however, was not an infant, as originally thought, but a collection of miscellaneous body parts, including skull fragments and three left feet—one from a child. A Hartford newspaper printed the morgue photograph of No. 1565, but still there was no positive identification. Twenty-one female children between the ages of four and nine had been killed, either by the flames or by being slammed and flattened in the ensuing every-man-for-himself panic; with identification difficult, time short, and the emotional strain unbearable, it is entirely possible that some relative could have selected the wrong child. "One mistake at the armory," O'Nan writes, "would throw the whole chain into chaos."

By the late nineteen-eighties, Lt. Davey had become convinced that No. 1565 was a girl called Eleanor Cook, an eight-year-old who had gone to the circus that day with her mother, Mildred, and two brothers, Donald and Edward. Edward died at Municipal Hospital, and Mildred was hospitalized for weeks with serious burns, drifting in and out of consciousness. The child in the morgue photo was not a perfect match for Eleanor Cook, but, as an arson investigator, Davey knew that heat at the level of intensity reached inside the Big Top shrinks cartilage in the tips of the ear, pugs the nose, and pulls lips back from the teeth, which would explain the differences. In 1991, No. 1565 was officially identified as Eleanor Cook and reburied alongside Edward. Mildred Cook was never entirely satisfied that the girl in the photograph was her daughter, and O'Nan says that pediatric and forensic dentists concluded, after a comparison of dental charts, that No. 1565's teeth belonged to a girl significantly younger than Eleanor. Perhaps No. 1565 is still known but to God.

O'Nan's book is grisly, scary, and horrifying, but, then, so was the event it so effectively re-creates. For those even minimally involved, every disaster is ultimately personal, every family has its own story. My brother Nick returned to his unit the day after the fire and shipped out to Europe, where, still in his teens, he was decorated for valor. Stephen died at forty-three; his widow said he never went to a movie without first checking where the exits were, and he always insisted on sitting in an aisle seat. He and I shared a bedroom throughout our childhood, and were as close as tree and bark, but he never spoke about what happened that day on Barbour Street. After Ted Johnson and I talked this spring, he sent me a diagram of the Big Top and its three rings, including the animal chute, and indicated where in the grandstand he, his family, and Stephen had been sitting. While most of his memories are lucid and exact, those eight or ten minutes between the time he was separated from his mother and the time he found himself outside the tent remain a blank—eloquent testimony to just how awful that July afternoon in 1944 remains to him, fifty-six years after the fact. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Is That a Gun in Your Pocket? Women's Experience of Power in Hollywood, *by Rachel Abramowitz (Random House; $26.95).* When Stanley Kubrick took two years to shoot and edit a movie, he was hailed as an eccentric genius; when Elaine May did the same thing, no woman got to direct a Hollywood feature for another decade. Abramowitz recounts, in eye-opening detail, the experiences of some of the pioneering women in the movie business: from the struggles of individual talents, like the actress-director Jodie Foster and the production designer Polly Platt (she was responsible for much of the success of Peter Bogdanovich and James Brooks), to the political accommodations of executives like the superagent Sue Mengers and the studio chief Dawn Steel, both of whom became even more flamboyantly vulgar than the guys who surrounded them.

Destiny, *by Tim Parks (Arcade; $24.95).* Chris Burton is standing in a hotel lobby in Knightsbridge when he learns that his schizophrenic son has stabbed himself to death with a screwdriver: "With that awful clarity that always accompanies our perception of the worst, I realised that this was the end for my wife and myself. Our impossible alliance is over." Maybe, maybe not. Parks is an expert not only on the severe punishments exacted within unhappy relationships but also on the self-serving delusions fostered by those attempting to slip free of their claims. As Chris follows his Italian wife on a hellish trip back to Rome for their son's burial, his perceptions become increasingly suspect, and the nature of his destiny—as an Englishman, as a father, as a writer, and as a husband—is unnervingly called into question. The urgency of Parks's narrative is a most unbearable, but the agility with which the author fuses his grand themes holds your attention through the last paragraph.

The Feast of Love, *by Charles Baxter (Pantheon; $24).* An insomniac Midwestern novelist named Charlie Baxter becomes the unwitting audience of a neighbor's midnight confession, and is drawn into a tale of love in its manifold guises—confused, ecstatic, unrequited. We hear the story of Kathryn, who left her husband for the female shortstop of a local softball team; of Diana, a capricious lawyer who doesn't want anyone to want her too much; and of Chloé, a pierced teenager with a strong sense of justice and a doomed passion for a former drug addict. Baxter's novel is a modern Symposium, unexpectedly hilarious in its attempt to get at the evasive truths of love; unlike Plato's treatise, though, its strength lies in its recognition that such truths aren't universal. As one character puts it, "I know these are generalizations, but I don't care, because they're my generalizations, so I don't have to prove them."

Portrait of an Artist, as an Old Man, *by Joseph Heller (Simon & Schuster; $23).* Heller's final novel is an object lesson in creative futility. Eugene Pota, the hero, is an aging novelist whose imaginative powers have been in steady decline since his earlier, more successful works. The book is a record of Pota's attempts to cap off his career with another triumph, and consequently a collection of false starts: here a parody of "The Metamorphosis," there a Greek-myth burlesque set among lickerish gods. While these set pieces are almost uniformly unsatisfying (only a fantasia that anatomizes the melancholy of nineteenth-century authors really works), there is something bleakly bracing in Pota's obsession with his own literary desiccation.

THE ART WORLD

STILLNESS

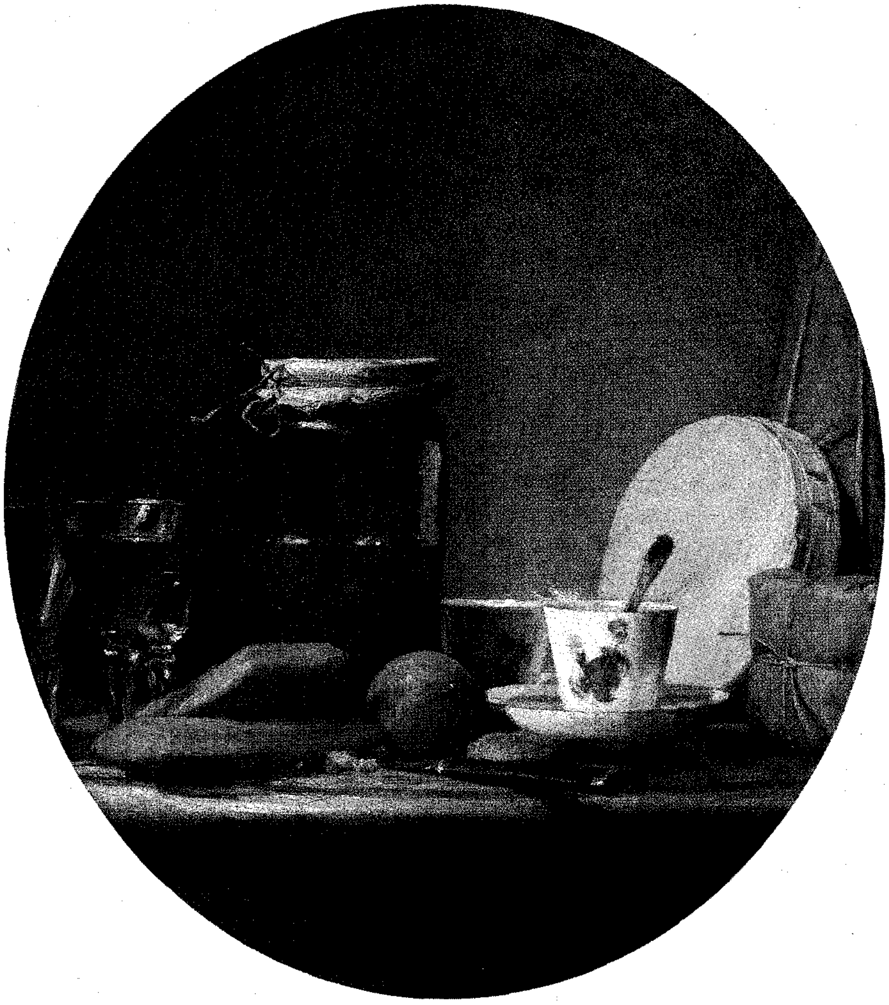
A celebration of Chardin's eerie mastery.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin is the most silencing of painters. Viewed in a retrospective that ends its tour at the Metropolitan Museum, where it will remain until September 3rd, the eighteenth-century Frenchman's still-lifes and genre scenes put thought and emotion on hold with gentle sternness. I fancy the work saying, "No doubt you are intelligent and full of feeling, but for the moment simply look, if you don't mind." When I first saw the show, earlier this year on a harried afternoon in London, at the Royal Academy, I minded. My attention slid off the dauby or crusty, sombre little pictures, and I left feeling irked. Most good art yields some fraction of itself—a style recognition, grace, a promise—to an interested glance. Not Chardin's. If you won't wholeheartedly contemplate it, it will have nothing to do with you. You must relax and gaze. No special effort or acuity is required, but patience is not optional. Gradually, you are engulfed in mysteries of painting and of something else supremely indefinite—something about existence. Now, fortunately, I've had a second chance at the show. It's good to be on congenial terms with Chardin.

It is also timely. At the present moment, when the smell of linseed oil is seeping back into the halls of art schools—but so far there is not a great deal to show, as if painting were a disassembled appliance lacking its instruction manual—young artists wrestle with the simplest questions of why and how to paint. Chardin dealt rather exclusively with such questions. You've heard of a "painter's painter." Chardin is painting's painter. He doesn't use paint to produce effects so much as solicit it to precipitate miracles. Though he was a gregarious man who was in the thick of his time's art life, he was fiercely secretive when he worked. I think it was because of chagrin at how abjectly he depended on serendipity. No one could plan the characteristic beauties of Chardin's work. They happen to us because they happened to him, sweating at his easel over what threatened to be dull messes. The philosopher and pioneering art critic Diderot reported that at the Salon of 1763 Jean-Baptiste Greuze, the leading genre painter of the day, was observed to pause before a Chardin and then pass on, "heaving a deep sigh." I imagine Greuze thinking, Some guys have all the luck! That painting, the Louvre's "The Jar of Olives," is not at the Met, but any of a dozen that are could have stung Greuze equally. I recalled this anecdote while noting an astonishing color—a smoldering orange—that sounds a deep bass note in "The Jar of Apricots" (1758). Were I a rival of Chardin's, I might briefly consider hanging myself.

Chardin, who was born in 1699, arrived during a low point for French painting. Watteau died in 1721, leaving no artistic heirs who were remotely his peers. The French court even imported painters from Venice to pep things up, but they proved disappointing. Legend has it that when the young Chardin showed his work anonymously, some academicians went into raptures at the discovery of an unknown Flemish master. The previous century had seen the golden age of Flemish and Dutch still-life, which was indeed the tradition on which Chardin based himself—but with major differences from the start. Along with Greuze, he was one of Diderot's two favorite contemporary painters. For nineteen years, starting in 1755, he was put in charge of hanging the biennial Salon of the Académie Royale. Given the egos of artists, that tenure supports



"The Jar of Apricots": Chardin was an artist who painted for the sake of painting.

his reputation as a disarming man. He was married twice. His first wife died, as did two infant daughters. He groomed his only son, Jean-Pierre, for the prestigious vocation of history painting. The two quarrelled over money. Jean-Pierre apparently committed suicide at the age of forty. The hint of darkness is in keeping with the exacerbated sensitivity of Chardin's art. He can't have been easy to live with.

Chardin eschewed the showy, eye-fooling sensations of Flemish still-life. With him, the illusion of reality is a conviction won on scanty evidence. You buy it, but when you look carefully you can't say why, because what's there is just paint. Except in the smallest formats, Chardin's brushwork usually resolves into passing verisimilitude only at distances of between six and ten feet. Strong pleasure occurs at closer, blurring quarters. Standing back, you see pictures that bespeak intimacy—domestic stuff, preoccupied, ordinary people. Approaching the canvases, you receive something actively intimate—the obsessive passion of the artist to wrest rightness from his material. It becomes hard to distinguish awkwardnesses from inspirations. A smear of orange tells everything knowable about light when it collides with the bottom of a copper pot. Reddish smudges on the cheeks of a servant woman convey the hectic pith of a busy day in "The Return from Market"—but then, somehow, so does everything else in this eventful composition, including a tiny triangle of blue sky over the top of an opened door. That blue patch nearly took my breath away. How does Chardin do it? He paints. He keeps reaping epiphanies that are within the reach of painting, because that—and not copper pots or servant women—is what he is about. He was the first painter to convince us that he painted purely for painting's sake, an example that was not lost on the greatest of those painters who learned from him: Edouard Manet.

When you think about it, the term "still-life" epitomizes painting—a time-consuming investment of the painter's life that holds still to be realized by the viewer, whose life is correspondingly enriched. Chardin's work is Exhibit A for this definition. The art historian and critic Michael Fried wrote an influential book, "Absorption and Theatricality" (1980), that leans heavily on Chardin's genre scenes to explain this particular dynamic. According to Fried, Chardin's people—think of the famous "Young Man Blowing Bubbles"—are beheld in states of absorption so total that the presence of the work's beholder is negated. Now, that's a bizarre notion. Even a feeling that my presence is "obliviated," in Fried's coinage, affirms my presence, because who else is feeling it? But anyone might be driven to outlandish ideas by Chardin's eerie, dreaming intensity. Thus Diderot: Chardin's "harmony" is "like what the theologians say about the spirit, sensible in the whole and secret in all details." Not to be left out, I'll paraphrase a remark that Paul Valéry made about poetry: Chardin's paintings are painted by someone other than the painter to be viewed by someone other than the viewer. Any sufficiently shuddery paradox may serve as well. (Try this at home.) But one signal sensation in Chardin remains untouched so far. I get a whiff of it from the French phrase for still-life—*nature morte.*

For me, Chardin's most penetrating motif explicitly involves death: still-lifes with freshly killed game animals, notably rabbits. The subject came from a tradition of celebrating nature's bounty, but there's nothing festive in Chardin's treatment of it. There's nothing precisely sad, either. He isn't propagandizing for animal rights. Bunnies get hunted, and that's that. Moreover, he couldn't render them with such fantastic accuracy if they were alive. It could be said that they died for art, that Chardin's art hungrily consumes—beyond their marvels of shape, texture, and color—their very deadness. Here are creatures formed for motion that no longer move. They have embarked on the second career that awaits all beings, as inanimate objects of a special sort. They lie or dangle in eloquent postures that in life nothing can assume. They strike me as the deadest things in art—vibrantly, lyrically so. Is this disturbing? It is to me. It verges on an indecency that is all the more nerve-racking for having no touch of the grotesque, and for being firmly in the cause of beauty. The phenomenon of beauty can be a kind of murder, snatching something out of time and freezing it permanently. So I am led to reflect by M. Chardin. ♦

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THE THEATRE

HEAVENLY ITCH

Tennessee Williams's record of the soul and the senses.

BY JOHN LAHR

"The irresponsible days of my youth are over," Tennessee Williams wrote of the life-changing moment in 1940, when in Mexico he received a telegram from the Theatre Guild urging him to return to New York for his first Broadway production. The play was "Battle of Angels." By then, Williams had won literary acknowledgment from the Group Theatre, been taken up by the prestigious Liebling-Wood agency in New York, and, having survived a painful childhood and three Depression years of soul-destroying work in the shoe company at which his bullying father was an executive, set himself on the single-minded pursuit of his artistic destiny. "Out of the sheer surfeit of being beaten down, I gathered out of my father's fierce blood the power to rise somehow," he wrote to a friend. "And how could the rise be gentle." Tom Williams had been reborn Tennessee Williams, the self-proclaimed "Homo Emancipatus—the Completely Free Man," and "Battle of Angels" was the first full-scale assertion of his remodelled romantic self.

Williams had given his surrogate hero both his own age (twenty-nine) and a surname, Xavier, that was phonetically linked to Sevier, a distinguished name in his own family tree. It also sounded like "Saviour"—and that is how the jejune Williams saw his calling, which he described in another play of the same period as "the high reach of the spirit." In the fictional Southern backwater of Two River County, the empathetic Val Xavier, who answers to the nickname Snakeskin (he wears a snakeskin jacket), is a catalyst for transformation. Like another Williams spokesman, Tom Wingfield, in "The Glass Menagerie," he has "tricks up his sleeve." In fact, Val is surrounded by magic: summoned up, seemingly from nowhere, by the Choctaw chant of a local conjure man, he works his spell, within the play's "nonrealistic" story, with the guitar he carries. Newly arrived in town, he wanders into a dry-goods store looking for work. Soon he has called life out of the store's joyless proprietress, Lady Torrance, and the other local womenfolk who project their longing onto him; the threatened men, on the other hand, project their hate, and they succeed in driving Val's free spirit away and finally destroying it. Xavier is an irresistible and mysterious amalgam of Williams's sexual and spiritual ideal, one of his many solitary, dispossessed, fugitive minds who hanker for both passion and purity. "I lived in corruption, but I'm not corrupted," the unpredatory Val says. In a brilliant speech, which incidentally explains the salvation Williams found in writing, Val calls his guitar "my life's companion": "It washes me clean like water when anything unclean has touched me."

In "Battle of Angels," Williams contrived to set the savage forces of life and death against each other in order to demonstrate his own battle between the pressures of philistine society and of his truth-seeking bohemian soul. "We of the artistic world are the little gray foxes and all the rest are the hounds," he said around the time he wrote the play, which dramatizes the traditional hunt. "It is a fight to the death."

Whatever the strengths of Williams's romantic vision of self-aggrandizement, the beginning of the Second World War was no time to preach it. "Battle of Angels" closed in Boston before it reached Broadway. Seventeen years later, when the conformity and violence of the fifties had turned America into a version of what Williams called "beanstalk country," he substantially rewrote the play as "Orpheus Descending" and sent it out into

Helen Mirren, Stuart Townsend, and Saskia Reeves, from the cast of "Orpheus Descending." Photograph by Dudley Reed.

the world as an "emotional record" of his youth, in which the public could "find the trail of my sleeve-worn heart." Despite Sydney Lumet's fascinating screen version, "The Fugitive Kind" (with memorable performances from Marlon Brando and Anna Magnani), the revision didn't fare much better, and its failure sent Williams briefly into psychoanalysis. The most recent Broadway production, mounted in 1988, with Vanessa Redgrave doing a pidgin-Italian imitation of Magnani, didn't help matters.

But Nicholas Hytner's lucid revival (at London's Donmar Warehouse through August 12th) restores both lustre and honor to Williams's subtle spiritual autobiography, allowing the audience to see beyond the play's showy exterior to its compelling internal drama. The set plays the same game as the story, manufacturing a stunning world of light and shadow, which, as Val says, "*do* get—*mixed.*" Bob Crowley's gray and derelict latticed roof, with its suggestive cobwebs, fans out above the drygoods store like an ominous bird's wing; an upstage staircase—well lit by Hugh Vanstone—leads to the unseen living quarters above the store where the dying malevolent Jabe Torrance (the chilling Richard Durden) and his captive wife, Lady (Helen Mirren), cohabit in hatred-hard separation, and throws long shadows up the gray brick back wall which suggest a cage. But the real source of light here is Val. Hytner has struck lucky with Stuart Townsend, who is thin and delicate-featured but strong and centered in himself. If Townsend's Val doesn't gen-

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erate the same sense of animal magnetism and mischief as Brando (who could?), he still generates heat: a palpable combination of sweetness and sexuality. He is, I suspect, the Next Big English Thing. Almost as soon as Townsend makes his entrance, he accompanies himself with some prowess on the guitar, performing a song that shows him off as both sex symbol and searcher:

> Then my feet come down to walk on earth,
> And my mother cried when she gave me birth.
> Now my feet walk far and my feet walk fast,
> But they still got an itch for heavenly grass
> They still got an itch for heavenly grass.

Townsend is a good match for Helen Mirren's very specific and riveting gravity, and both actors play well against Williams's melodrama, which can veer toward the operatic unless carefully watched. To Williams, who was raised in an Episcopal rectory and whose plays are Christ-haunted, the enemy of the liberating romantic notion of self is the suffocating Christian notion of self-sacrifice. Here, Lady is Jabe's dutiful chattel. Unlucky in more than love (she aborted a baby after her lover jilted her for a society marriage), she was orphaned as a girl when her Italian-immigrant father died fighting a blaze in his vineyard—set by racists because he sold wine to blacks. "He bought her, when she was a girl of eighteen!" one of the gossiping town biddies says of Jabe. "He bought her and he bought her cheap because she'd been thrown over and had her heart broken." Lady, whose domination is signalled by the constant pounding of Jabe's cane from the floor above, is always dressed in black and always at Jabe's call. In Mirren's superbly controlled performance, she is a force field of willpower, an embodiment of the living death of resignation—until the seed of freedom is planted in her imagination by Val's famous speech about legless birds that never touch the earth. "They live their whole lives on the wing, and they sleep on the wind," Val explains to Lady, who tells him that she'd like to be one of them. "So'd I like to be one of those birds," Val continues. "They's lots of people would like to be one of those birds and never be corrupted!" As a character, Lady belongs to a line of remarkable, long-suffering Williams heroines—Alma Winemiller, Blanche du Bois, Rose della Rose—who, cut off from life and from their feelings, have been warped by their devotion to others. Lady has killed her heart; Val resuscitates it. Her victory—the play's romantic apotheosis—is the unlearning of repression and the seizing of bliss, albeit short-lived.

In Hytner's production, the brooding forces that compel Val to leave town—the murderous ignorance, fear, and violence of rural life—coalesce in the huge and menacing form of Sheriff Talbott (the terrifying William Hootkins). Talbott and his henchman virtually tree Val, who leaps on the store counter as knives swipe at his legs. Before she can leave with him, Lady is gunned down by Jabe, whom the stage directions describe as "death's self." All that remains of Val in the community is his snakeskin jacket. "Wild things leave skins behind them, they leave clean skins and teeth and white bones behind them," says another Delta free spirit and outsider, Carol Cutrere (Saskia Reeves), as she cradles the coat in her arms. "And these are tokens passed from one to another, so that the fugitive kind can follow their kind."

Williams, whose nickname was Bird, managed to live, like his legless birds, more or less on the move. He understood his peripatetic destiny early. "Oh God . . . there is so much hurt in the world," he wrote to a friend, soon after the failure of "Battle of Angels." "You have to evade and evade." And his oeuvre serves the same poetic function for his century as Val's snakeskin jacket: his characters and symbols—like stones on a bushwhacked trail—are a kind of map of the soul's struggle to be both great and good; they mark one man's dangerous ascent to the furthest reaches of individualism, where ultimately even he lost his way. By 1957, the year "Orpheus Descending" was first staged, Williams had admitted, "I can't be the best part of myself anymore." But the longing—the heavenly itch Val sings about and embodies—never left his life or his luminous work. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

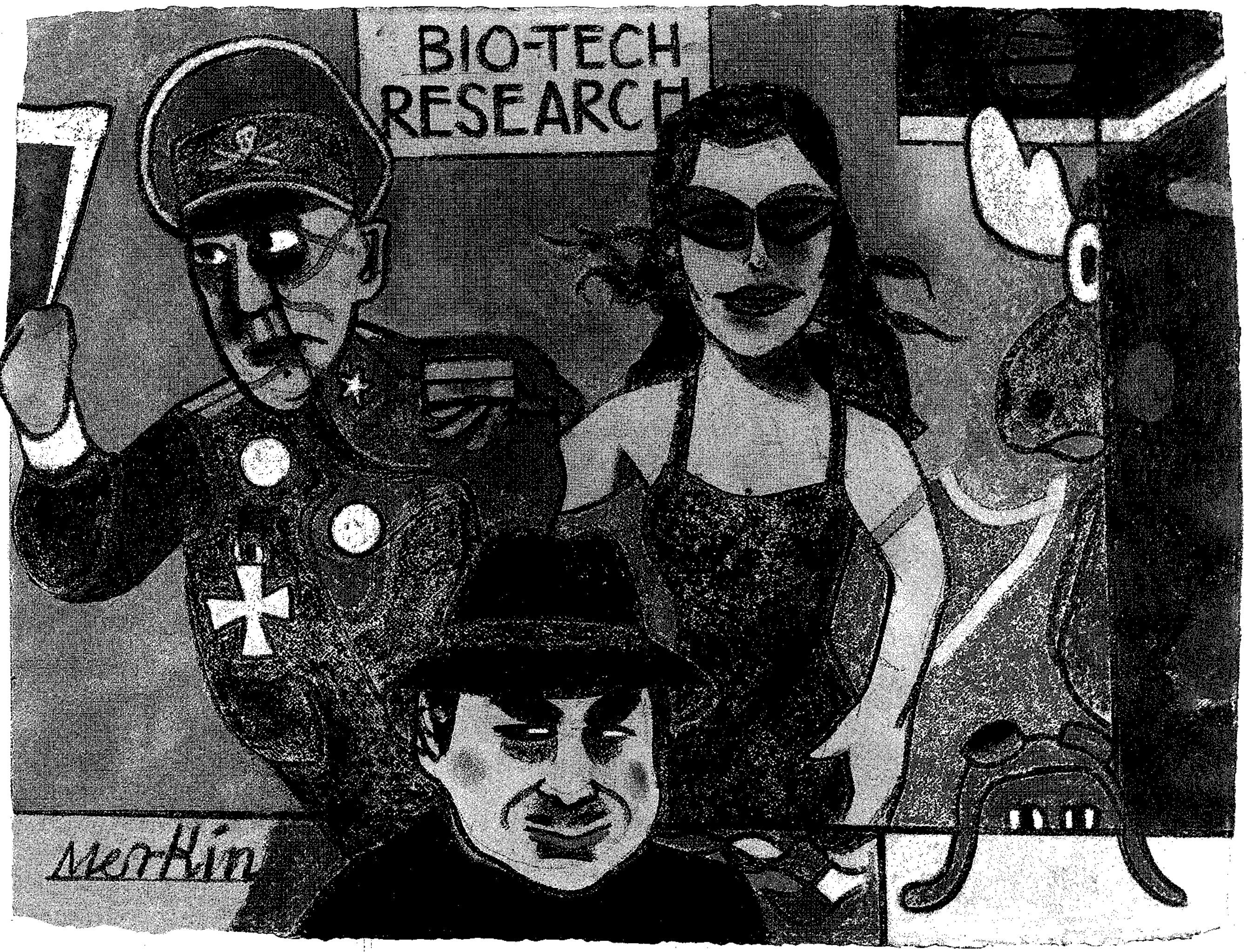
IN TROUBLE

Rocky and Bullwinkle are not alone.

BY DAVID DENBY

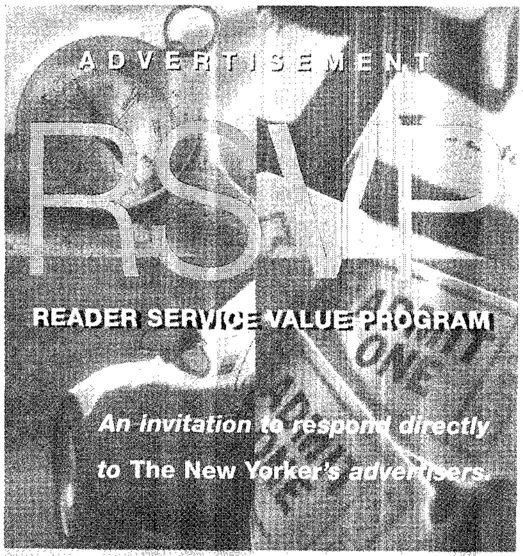
I kept drifting off during "The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle." I kept drifting off even though the movie isn't all that bad. Robert De Niro, wearing a black scab of wig and holding one finger aloft as he speaks, is fervently mirthless as Fearless Leader, but Rene Russo, stalking around in purple, with matching eyeshade and blush, is a heavenly nutcake. Russo is Natasha Fatale, Fearless Leader's henchwoman, and every time I shook myself awake she was doing something funny, or at least looking great. And then there were the animated heroes, Rocket J. Squirrel and Bullwinkle J. Moose. The stalwarts of the original TV show, "Rocky and His Friends," which first aired in 1959, these two have always been a highly civilized duo; they make dreadful puns, like an Upper West Side couple who have been married too long, though their manners are better. The movie, which mixes animated and live-action figures in frantic slapstick, rattles along pleasantly, but, as you're sitting there, it rattles right off the screen. In form, "Rocky and Bullwinkle" is one of those self-referential postmodernist larks: its subject is the attempted revival of Rocky and Bullwinkle's career. The boys pitch their own rebirth to a studio executive (Janeane Garofalo), and a narrator speaks of "expensive animated characters instantly converted to even more expensive motion-picture stars." There are mild sallies directed at the studios, and at the President of the United States, but only the willfully naïve could call the movie (as the press notes do) satire. Satire of what? Most of the gags are just media references. In a case like this, "satire" becomes a form of self-conscious joking—the term sophisticated writers and directors use when they've been overpaid to revive a cartoon franchise. In "Rocky and Bullwinkle," the jokes go by so fast that the filmmakers seem almost ashamed of them, and the picture whizzes into nullity; it becomes a movie "event" without becoming a movie.

If "Rocky and Bullwinkle" is in trouble, it may not be alone. On June 29th, the day before the picture opened, both the *Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*



RICHARD MERKIN

In form, the movie, which takes up where the TV show left off, is a self-referential postmodernist lark.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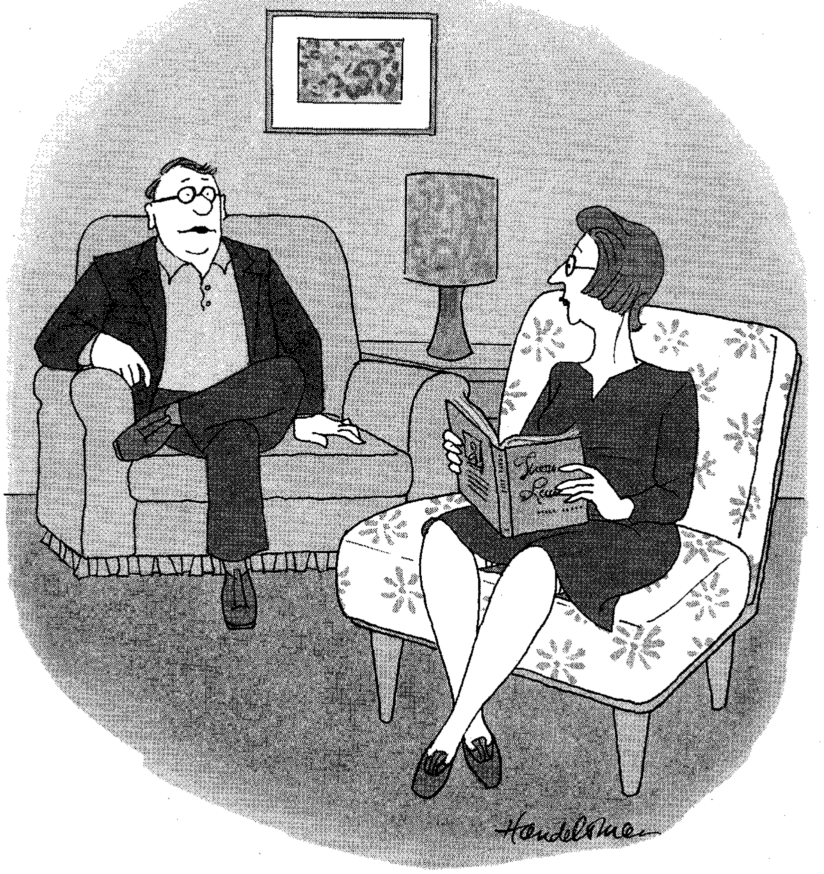

"What would I do differently if you had my life to live over again?"

• •

published stories reporting that studio executives were worried. It seems that summer box-office is big, but not big *enough*—that is, not as big as it was last summer. By the following weekend, however, the press was reporting that all was well. "The Perfect Storm" had opened huge, and people were streaming back into the theatres. I might care more about these mood-of-Burbank stories if the studios were bringing out sternly ambitious or even sublimely silly movies—anything with drive and temperament. Commercial success would then fall like a ray of sunshine, and failure would darken hope—as always, the future of a popular art form rests partly in the hands of its audience. But why devote so much ink to the marketing of routine commercial pictures? Big numbers do have a kind of fascination, but the trouble with fascination is that it doesn't simply hold you, and it would be unfortunate if moviegoers were to become as cynical as the Hollywood powers who have reduced an art form to a business. Irrelevance threatens to overtake movie journalism. The real story, as my network of spies on the coast informs me, is not the vagaries of weekend box-office but the near-panic in Hollywood right now: the confusion about what to make and the frequently tepid movies that result—namely, movies that either fall into a predetermined niche or (the other side of the coin) turn out to be about not much of anything.

"Rocky and His Friends" worked well as a half-hour cartoon show, but as a full-length movie it struggles to find a reason to exist. Another new movie, with the bizarre title of "Disney's The Kid," also founders in semi-pointlessness. For the first half hour or so, the talented screenwriter Audrey Wells provides good nasty dialogue for Bruce Willis as Russ Duritz, a svelte but self-dissatisfied Los Angeles image consultant who puts everyone else down. But the director, Jon Turtletaub, has a weakness for mystical uplift, and the movie quickly loses its malicious gaiety; it becomes a limp fantasy of self-recognition, a therapy dream. The unhappy Duritz confronts his equally unhappy eight-year-old self, Rusty, in the shape of a forgettable round-faced actor named Spencer Breslin—a moaning pudge with a chipmunk smile. I longed for Willis to turn away from the child and insult his next victim, but, instead, he bonds with his former self. Duritz comforts and reassures the boy while receiving inspiration from him on how to live the rest of his own life. This doesn't make much sense—the child will still grow into the nasty forty-year-old Duritz—but Marc Shaiman's corny music tries to raise a lump in our throats, and "Disney's The Kid" ends with Bruce Willis thrusting his arms up in triumph. In middle age, he will mature, and become happy at last. His victory, however, caused this moviegoer to slink out in defeat: whatever the filmmakers set out to say about the way one uses the past, they lost it in summer-season propitiation of the family audience—an audience that, in a gruesome irony, may no longer exist for a movie as taffy-pulled as this one.

"Sunshine" has a real subject—boy, is it real. This enormous epic, directed by the Hungarian István Szabó and written by Szabó and the American playwright Israel Horovitz, uses the rise and fall of an haut-bourgeois Jewish family, the Sonnenscheins, as a prism through which to view the disastrous history of twentieth-century Hungary. At the end of the nineteenth century, during the long and liberal reign of Emperor Franz Joseph, the Sonnenscheins become wealthy by making a popular elixir. Ralph Fiennes then appears as the young man of the family in three successive generations: he plays a patriotic judge; a champion fencer who runs afoul of anti-Semitism in the Fascist era; and a Holocaust survivor who becomes a relentless police interrogator during the Communist dictatorship. The movie has two rather scowling themes—the failure of Jewish assimilation, and the collapse of aristocratic honor and bourgeois propriety into the squalid violence, harsh manners, and sexual crudities of the postwar years. Szabó works in English (the cast includes Rosemary Harris, Jennifer Ehle, and William Hurt), and he tries to sum up each era in a few emblematic words or gestures. At its worst, "Sunshine" is overambitious and stiff, and begins to resemble a lavishly compiled family photo album. At its best (in the fencing scenes and then the torture and death of the fencer), it is startlingly vivid, and leaves an American viewer grateful for our banal but stable democracy.

The lovely Chinese movie "Shower" also has a subject, though it's an unlikely one: rest. A modern young fellow eager to make money in the new China comes home to the shabby Beijing neighborhood in which he grew up. At first, Da Ming (Pu Cun Xin) feels nothing but fear and disgust. He's bored by his elderly dad, who runs a musty old bathhouse, and frightened by his retarded brother, who loves the father and works happily amid the damp tiles. As far as Da Ming is concerned, the place is a home for the living dead. Men arrive every day, groaning and complaining, soak for hours, and then get rubbed, massaged, and slapped back to life. After a while, however, Da Ming gets pulled in to the lulling rhythm of the place, and we do, too. The blue light of the bathhouse is soothing, and if the men desire to be infantilized, the movie asks, what's wrong with that? It's the anti-heroic view of life, in which stillness is blessedness and the smallest accomplishments deserve to be celebrated. Directed by Zhang Yang, this independent production is the least stylized and the most realistic and emotionally accessible Chinese film I've ever seen. One wonders: Does "Shower" represent a secret loathing of the exuberant new world of global capitalism, the modernity that at least part of China is rushing to embrace? Perhaps. On the surface, however, it's all about people taking care of one another, and, as such, its mood is bittersweet, since taking care opens one not only to the pleasures of family love but to the pain of disappointment and loss. ♦

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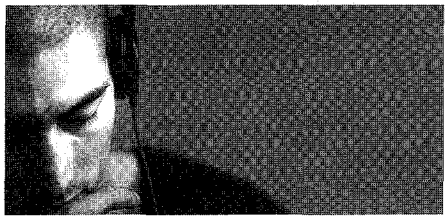

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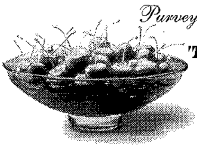
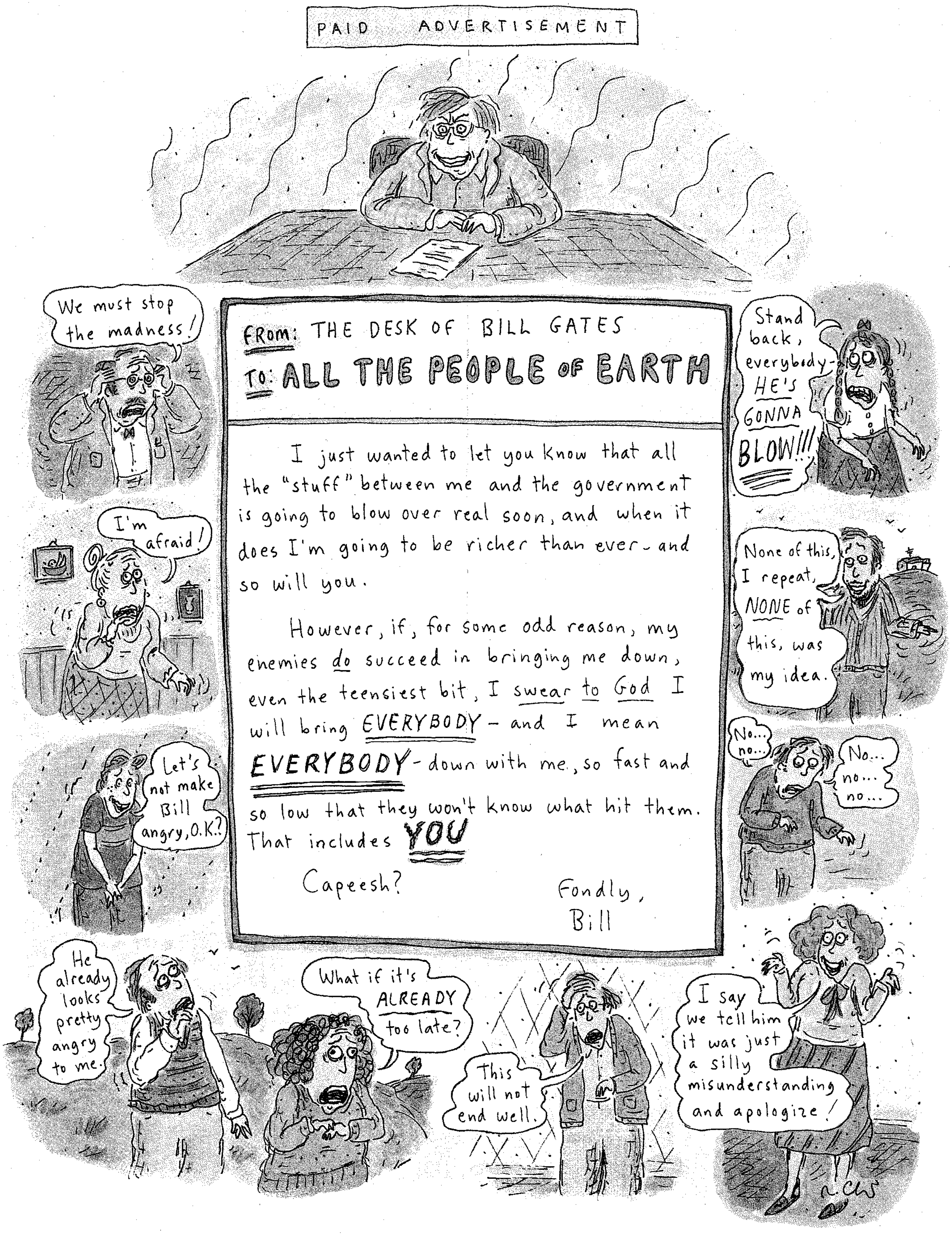



PAID ADVERTISEMENT
We must stop the madness!
Stand back, everybody— HE'S GONNA BLOW!!!
I'm afraid!
None of this, I repeat, NONE of this, was my idea.
Let's not make Bill angry, O.K.?
No... no...
No... no... no...
He already looks pretty angry to me.
What if it's ALREADY too late?
This will not end well.
I say we tell him it was just a silly misunderstanding and apologize!
R. Chast

FROM: THE DESK OF BILL GATES

TO: ALL THE PEOPLE OF EARTH

I just wanted to let you know that all the "stuff" between me and the government is going to blow over real soon, and when it does I'm going to be richer than ever—and so will you.

However, if, for some odd reason, my enemies *do* succeed in bringing me down, even the teensiest bit, I swear to God I will bring EVERYBODY—and I mean **EVERYBODY**—down with me, so fast and so low that they won't know what hit them. That includes **YOU**.

Capeesh?

Fondly,
Bill

THANKS TO MODERN SCIENCE

17 INNOCENT PEOPLE HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM DEATH ROW.

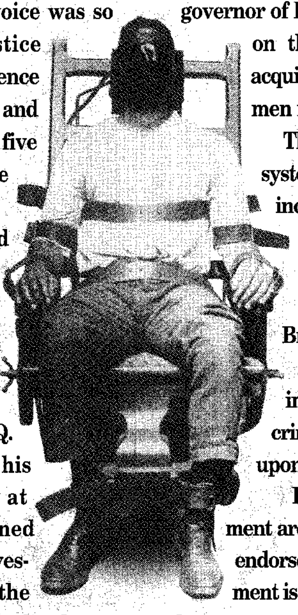
THANKS TO MODERN POLITICS

23 INNOCENT PEOPLE HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THE LIVING.

On April 15, 1999, Ronald Keith Williamson walked away from Oklahoma State Prison a free man. An innocent man. He had spent the last eleven years behind bars. "I did not rape or kill Debra Sue Carter," he would shout day and night from his death row cell. His voice was so torn and raspy from his pleas for justice that he could barely speak. DNA evidence would eventually end his nightmare and prove his innocence. He came within five days of being put to death for a crime he did not commit.

Williamson's plight is not an isolated one. Nor is it even unusual.

Anthony Porter also came within days of being executed. The state of Illinois halted his execution as it questioned whether or not Porter was mentally competent. Porter has an I.Q. of fifty-one. As the state questioned his competence, a journalism class at Northwestern University questioned his guilt. With a small amount of investigating, they managed to produce the real killer. After sixteen years on death row, Anthony Porter would find his freedom. He was lucky. He escaped with his life. A fate not shared by twenty-three other innocent men.



The Chicago Tribune, in its five-part series "Death Row justice derailed," pronounced, "Capital punishment in Illinois is a system so riddled with faulty evidence, unscrupulous trial tactics, and legal incompetence that justice has been forsaken." The governor of Illinois recently declared a moratorium on the death penalty after the state had acquired the dubious honor of releasing more men from death row than it had executed.

The unfairness that plagues the Illinois system also plagues every other state as well: incompetent lawyers, racial bias, and lack of access to DNA testing all inevitably lead to gross miscarriages of justice. As Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, Jr., stated, "Perhaps the bleakest fact of all is that the death penalty is imposed not only in a freakish and discriminatory manner, but also in some cases upon defendants who are actually innocent."

Even those who support capital punishment are finding it increasingly more difficult to endorse it in its current form. Capital punishment is a system that is deeply flawed – a system that preys on the poor and executes the innocent. It is a system that is fundamentally unjust and unfair. Please support our efforts to have a moratorium on further executions declared now. Support the ACLU.

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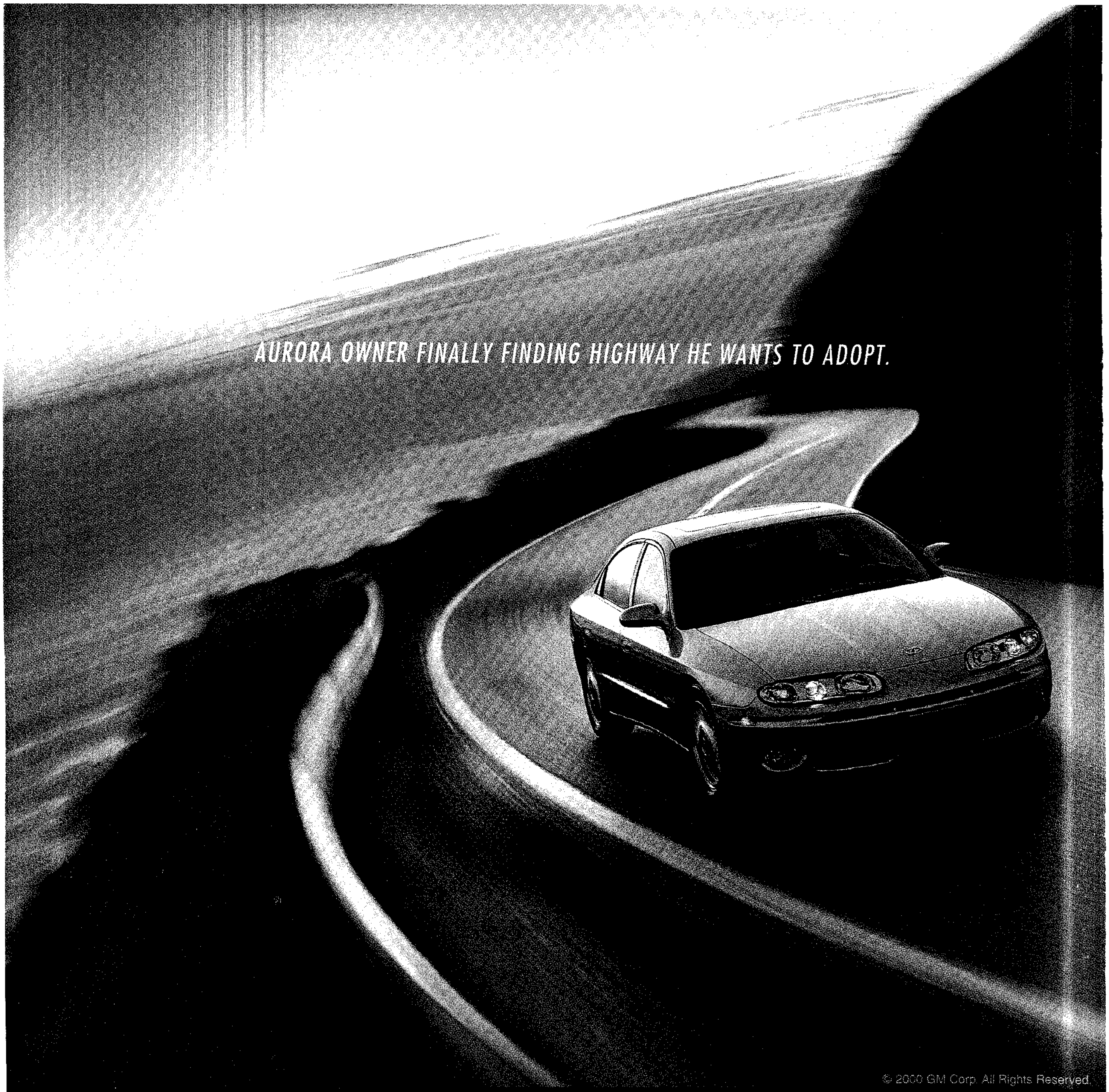
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